

WELLNESS TIPS

COPING WITH THE STRESS OF CHANGE

The beginning of this semester has been associated with many changes. Some are associated with beginning classes in the medical and PA programs. But additional changes have occurred in efforts to manage the Covid 19 pandemic.

Today's Wellness Tips focuses on coping with change.

With limitations on types of available activities and gatherings, you are probably spending more time in your home. It may be easy to let things slide, but maintaining a routine will help moderate stress you are experiencing.

Your academic schedule is not the only schedule to tend to. As academic assignments evolve, incorporate other activities/chores in your life into your schedule. Including meals, sleep, exercise, and leisure will seem more "official" if it's added on your calendar and help create balance and contribute to maintaining your energy for studying. Include breaks in your schedule to help you recharge.

Take breaks from the news if it is increasing your stress level.

If you find yourself stressed in arriving for in-person labs, take the time to arrive a little early. If you have early Zoom classes, take the time to be prepared and have that cup of coffee set to go so that you can be more focused.

Use relaxation breathing techniques throughout the day. There are numerous breathing techniques, but the basics are similar.

Close your eyes, unless uncomfortable to do so.

Breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth.

One technique has you holding your tongue in the middle of your mouth, not the roof or floor while breathing. Try it – it takes some concentration!

Breathe in and out slowly, to the count of 4 for each.

Check out YouTube for more breathing and other relaxation techniques.

Seek support. Maintain regular contact with friends and family. Work at establishing connections with classmates. Seek help early when you're having problems, such as virtual connectivity.

Although there is plenty that you can't control, identify areas in which you DO have control. Even small things can be helpful. Have a dedicated space for studying, leisure, and meals. Reach an agreement with roommates about how space will be used and perhaps when it will be used. Do you have quiet, uninterrupted space for Zoom classes? Develop a plan to address problems.

Think about the positive things in your life. Some people find it helpful to write these positives down and even post them where they are often seen.

Think about how you have coped with difficult times in the past. What was helpful about how you coped that you could also do now? Is there anything you could do differently this time that would be helpful?

Challenge catastrophic and negative predicting thoughts about the future, which result in increasing anxiety and stress. Ask yourself if these thoughts are accurate – what is the evidence to support it? Is there information that would contradict these thoughts? How would someone whose opinion you trust respond to your thought?

It's normal to feel stressed when change occurs, even when it is a planned and desirable change. Avoid becoming critical of yourself and take time to re-energize. Remind yourself that some of the changes you are currently experiencing are temporary and will end at some point.

ReachOut.com. “7 tips for dealing with change”

<https://au.reachout.com/articles/7-tips-for-dealing-with-change>

Mind Tools. “Coping With Change - Making the Best of a Stressful Situation”

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/coping-with-change.htm>

If you are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or excessively anxious or would like to talk with an MSCC counselor about other questions or concerns, feel free to schedule an appointment.

Stay well and stay healthy!

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If you would like to review previous Wellness Tips, check the CCOM Medical Student Counseling Center Website: <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>