

# Resilience Tips:

## Managing Faculty Stress

It is an understatement to say that the sudden shift to online classes, social distancing requirements, and business closures are causing an extreme amount of stress on everyone. Before we can help our students, we need to take care of ourselves.

### Purpose and Applications

- Recognize what stress is and what it looks like.
- Develop resilience techniques.
- Practice grounding skills to manage stress in healthy ways.

### Managing Faculty Stress

#### Understand What Stress Is and What it Looks Like

There are typically four major triggers for a stressful event:

- **Novelty**
- **Threat**
- **Unpredictability**
- **Lack of Control**

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of these are coming together at once.

There are four types of reactions:

- **Emotional**  
Fear, anxiety, irritability, numbness, frustration, boredom, distrust of those in power or authority, uncertainty of duration, grief (for loved ones, loss of freedom, career options, etc.), sadness, anger
- **Physical**  
Low energy, sluggishness, eating disruptions, sleeping disruptions, body tension, stomachaches, headaches
- **Cognitive**  
Difficulty concentrating, memory loss
- **Behavioral**  
Withdrawal by isolating yourself, not doing things that you normally love, getting into arguments, reckless behavior

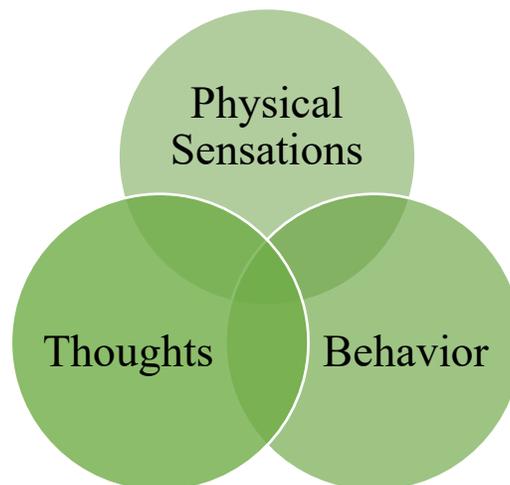
#### Developing Resilience

Typically, we can call upon experiences to help us cope with a stressful event. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, we don't have anything to guide us. In this sense, we are all looking to build resilience by finding balance.

While part of resilience is innate, the rest is a process to accept what is happening and how we choose to cope. To do this, we must focus on what we can control.

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- **Self-Regulate**
  - Minimize the amount of time that you spend watching and/or reading the news and social media. If you notice that you are becoming more distressed, reduce how often you access this material.
  - Instead, turn on or do something else that you find enjoyable.
- **Exercise**
  - Physical exercise is good for our mental health in the best of circumstances but is even more vital now.
  - If you can, practice safe physical distances while spending time outside. Go for a walk with the dog or your family. Go for a run. Take your bike out.
  - If you need to stay inside, you can practice yoga or find a free workout video.
- **Social Networks**
  - Stay connected to your loved ones. Call, text, video conference, email...but keep talking and checking on each other! Humans are social beings and we cannot remain emotionally and psychologically isolated.
- **Faith/Mindfulness**
  - Attend your church or synagogue services online if they are available.
  - If you regularly pray, continue to do so.
  - Practice meditation or other mindfulness practices.
    - Recognize how your thoughts influence the physical sensations that trigger behaviors.
    - Example: After going outside, I begin sneezing (behavior), which makes me worry that I may have the Coronavirus (thoughts) because I have that weird feeling in my chest (physical sensation).
    - Reframe these thoughts...I have wicked allergies that make me sneeze and cough every year. It is just that this year we are in the middle of a pandemic. I am ok! If I develop a fever or other symptoms, I will call the doctor.



*Figure 1. Mindfulness cycle*

It is important to be kind to yourself and others right now.

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“Don’t push for normal productivity right now. We’re not just working from home. We’re working from home in a pandemic. If things feel different it’s because they are different.”

–Dr. Karmel Choi, Ph.D., Clinical Fellow in Psychiatry, Harvard School of Public Health & Mass General Hospital

## Daily Coping Techniques

- **Basic Self-Care and Maintain Social Rhythms**
  - Stick with a routine. Take a shower. Eat meals at regular times. Practice good sleep hygiene by getting up and going to bed at regular times. Exercise regularly.
  - Daily stability regulates moods and provides a foundation to deal with stressors
- **Practice Relaxation Strategies**
  - Body scan mindfulness exercises, available on [YouTube](#), [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org), <https://www.livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/6-body-scan/>, and [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)
  - Breathing exercises, such as <https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-relief-breathing-techniques#1> or <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/breathing-exercises>
  - Walk in nature
  - Engage in cardio activities

## Quick Tips

- Be kind to yourself and to others. We are all in this together.
- Recognize how you are responding to stress so that you can better manage it. Share these tips with your students.
- TALK! Do not bottle in stress that you may be feeling. In Brene Brown’s (cleaned up) words, vulnerability stinks, but it is better once it is out.

## Additional Resources

- [EAP Services](#)
- [Love is Louder](#) – Tips, tools, and resources to help anyone who feels overwhelmed right now. Trained counselors are available to talk confidentially.
- [SAMHSA](#) – Individuals in recovery are particularly susceptible to relapse right now between the added stressors and lack of social support. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides a national hotline that is free, confidential, available 24/7/365 for referrals and information in English and Spanish.

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