

Resilience Tips: Managing Student Stress while Remote Learning



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.

Purpose and Applications

- Provide tips to guide students through remote learning challenges they may be facing.
- Provide tips and links for students to access additional resources to assist them during the pandemic.

Considerations for Online Learners

Students often look to us on how to react in a given situation. Unfortunately, no one has experience on how to navigate a pandemic, but we can model behavior and provide resources.

It is ok that we are not our best selves right now. Admitting this to the students helps them see that we are human and, while we don't have all the answers, we can try to help.

We do want to assist in the students with the following:

- Promote social connectedness
- Develop life skills
- Increase help-seeking behavior

Many people are simply trying to survive right now. How is this showing up?

- **Physically**
 - Food insecurity, housing insecurity, lack of access to technology (no internet, sharing a computer with family members, no computer at all), or they may be living in an abusive household.
- **Emotionally**
 - Current stressors, previous trauma being triggered, lack of access to help, uncertainty of how long this will last, fear of infection, grief (loss of a loved one, but also loss of career options, sports season, school traditions, commencement ceremony, etc.), distrust of those in power or authority, frustration, boredom.
- **Financially**
 - Furloughs, layoffs, company closures, no longer receiving paychecks

Recognize Who Your Students Are

Questions to ask yourself to better assist your students:

- What role(s) do they play at home?

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Are they the primary source of income? A caretaker for older parents, young children, or both? Are they trying to work from home, homeschool their children, and complete their homework for your class?

- Are gender dynamics involved?
Are your female students carrying a larger load right now emotionally in their homes or in their social network?
- Do you have students who may have other stress factors that may be exacerbated in remote learning environments?
 - **Disabilities** – Are the student’s accommodations being met with online learning? Are they struggling with the material but are hesitant to ask for assistance?
 - **Minorities** – Students of color often have poor outcomes when there are significant changes during a semester such as we are seeing now.
 - **LGBTQ** – Students on the Queer and Trans Spectrum also have increased risk for poor outcomes due to compounded stresses. To help ease their concerns, be sure to use their preferred names and pronouns, use an inclusive curriculum without binary thinking, and be affirming as these students are often living in a hostile environment.
 - **Veterans** – Are active duty students being deployed, called to assist in the pandemic, or have other duties assigned to them? If they are a veteran, do they have access to the services that they need?
 - **International** – International students already have a disproportionate amount of stress as they adjust to new academic systems, cultures, and often language. Many of these students are from China and face added fears and stigma during the pandemic.

How Do I Support Student Wellness from a Distance?

- Provide interaction within your course by using Discussions, Blogs, Journals, Group Assignments, and Collaborate sessions. Include videos created in TechSmith Relay. Being able to see each other in isolation is very valuable.
- Don’t penalize students who cannot attend a synchronous learning session. While connection matters, schedules are very unpredictable and students with vulnerability in the workplace cannot always attend class at the scheduled time.
- Provide wellness resources.
 - Create a space for students to share their COVID-19 experiences with you and their classmates. It is ok for us to be more transparent and vulnerable in this time as well. This space is similar to group therapy where the group shares challenges and coping skills, creating a sense of altruism within the individuals.
 - Encourage schedule consistency.
 - Incorporate regular “well-being checks.” You can use email, text, phone, or video to provide check-ins. You can send these as public checks or private correspondence.

What Can I Do to Help a Student?

Everyone responds to stress differently, so there is no one way to help a student. If students are acting significantly different than they had before, check in on them. Are students acting out angrily in class? Have they disengaged?

- Use the VAR Support Framework:
 - Validate the student’s concerns.
 - Appreciate that they shared it with you.
 - Refer the students to resources who can assist them.

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- Use Active Listening skills, responding to the context, emotions, and behaviors displayed by the student.
- Encourage students to talk to you. Students often do not know that they can talk to their professors.

Take every concern as a valid concern. We do not need to be everything to everyone, though! Remember, you must also take care of yourself.

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.

Additional Resources

- [University of South Carolina Upstate Counseling Services for Students](#)
- [The Steve Fund](#) – Resources to assist with mental health issues amid the COVID-19 pandemic, culturally trained counselors are available via phone or text.
- [The Jed Foundation](#) – JED is an organization dedicated to helping protect the emotional health of students and prevent suicide. Help is available with a toll-free phone number and text.
- [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.
- [Tips to Help College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – Written by the director of psychological services at McLean's College Mental Health Program, these tips are developed to help students and their families navigate current stressors.

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