

Virtual Anxiety and Stress Management Q and A

- Remember, its important to see each other's faces on zoom calls whenever possible (here and in your school/work/social lives) to maintain social connectedness.
- Set cognitive boundaries and actual boundaries to help provide structure during this time.

Cognitive Barriers

- Maintain as normal of a sleep schedule as possible, especially a consistent wake time
 - Will help improve function throughout the day, mood, focus, anxiety
 - Don't start napping just because you can. If you do choose to nap, earlier in the day is better, no more than 20-30 minutes.
- Get dressed in work clothes or school clothes
 - This is a cue to the brain that it is time to work. This is known as "enclothed cognition". Clothes have a big impact on cognitive function. What you are wearing can affect mood, concentration and performance.
- Keep meals at the same time to provide structure
- Maintain same habits for things like laundry and grocery shopping on specific days. Don't run to the grocery store 3-4x a week just because you can.

Physical Barriers

- Distinctive barriers for work space, study space, relaxing space. If short on actual space set up temporary stations. Ex. using a desk pad from amazon.
- Mix it up- such as using a different bathroom during the day.
- Pre-pack your lunch and snacks as normal so you're not tempted by access to a kitchen

General Tips

- It's ok to still be flexible. Adapt your schedule mindfully and productively – ex. if you normally would not work out during the day but you know this helps you stay focused or helps you to wake up. Then ok to make the shift, but set a new regular time- be intentional.
- Break large projects into chunks. Avoiding anything, including work, increases anxiety and stress.
- Incorporate exercise and being outside in a way that is safe (maintain 6 ft distance)
- Segment your day so you're not working or studying all the time. Add mental chapters to your day.
- Name what's bothering you so you can deal with it. You can't address something if you haven't identified what it is.
 - Ask yourself, what is missing from your normal routine and what can you do to fill that void?
- Reframe the situation to look at the positive.
 - Seeing family
 - Getting to catch up on cleaning, reading
 - More time in nature
- For communication with friends and family, decide what the goal of the interaction is and be clear, concise, and respectful.

- Stick to the facts and broad updates from reliable sources (CDC, WHO, local health dept.). Set limits for news time. People who follow the news constantly have a more negative outlook on the situation.

Student Questions

- How do I deal with non-COVID stressors? Many normal mechanisms like getting together with friends, going out, exercise, yoga, etc. are not available.
 - Deep, slow breathing, helping to calm nervous system response. Particularly on the exhale, count in for 4 and out for 5, building up. Practicing regularly is better than just when you're stressed.
 - Pause and consider what happens when things go forward
 - Try to not make a decision in the middle of feeling stressed
 - Slow down and walk through all the options for response (action, inaction)
 - Don't let your perception of exercise limitations limit your exercise
 - E.g. Don't not do yoga because your studio is closed, try streaming online and many fitness instructors are delivering live classes on Instagram and zoom.
- How much time should I allocate to non-work time?
 - Schedule in planned breaks like you would at school.
 - Recognize patterns of distraction to try and stay ahead of them
 - Set a timer
 - Schedule break time 5-15 minutes
 - Follow your normal routine as much as possible
 - Be as flexible as you would normally- if you would normally end your workday when you finish a task, don't force yourself to keep working just because you said you'd work for a certain amount of time.