



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

April 2020

## Looking Out for Mental and Emotional Health Concerns During the Coronavirus Pandemic

These are times of uncertainty, when students may feel stressed, unsafe and on edge. As Dr. Doreen Marshall reminds us in “Protecting Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Outbreak,” “It’s important to note that we are not helpless in light of current news events. We can always choose our response.”

She suggests the following to address mental/emotional health issues...

**Stay in the Present.** “Perhaps your worry is compounding,” writes Marshall. “You are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn’t happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment.” Engage in mindful activities.

**Separate What’s in Your Control from What’s Not.** This might involve stepping away from the news for a bit and then focusing on those things you *can* do, like washing your hands, looking out for one another, keeping up with schoolwork and steering clear of gatherings. Plus, do what makes you feel safe.

**Stay Connected and Reach Out.** Yes, self-isolation and social distancing can be tough. So, use alternative technological methods of staying

connected to help you get through things. And, if you’re struggling with mental/emotional health issues, reach out to a professional for help.

**Go Outside and Get Moving.** Exercise helps both physical and mental health, so figure ways to get moving. And if you can get some sunshine and fresh air at the same time, all the better! (see box for ideas)

**Source:** “Protecting Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Outbreak,” American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



### Get Outside to Gain Perspective

Yes, social distancing measures have us steering clear of large gatherings, yet you can still get outside! So, consider...

1. Repotting a plant outside – play in that dirt!
2. Stepping outside and putting your face up to the sun
3. Taking a walk to get your blood pumping
4. Shooting solo hoops at a local park
5. Raking your yard or somebody else’s
6. Parking a good distance from the grocery store entrance so you can be outside longer
7. Working at a picnic table for a period
8. Walking a dog while talking with neighbors – from a distance

Give yourself a dose of sunshine and nature to keep things in perspective.



# Grieving the “Little Things” That Have a Big Impact

As we continue to contend with the coronavirus and its associated limits, disruptions and shutdowns, students may be mourning seemingly “little things” that make up a big part of their lives. These things they’re mourning are quite significant.

For instance, students may no longer have the friends around that made up their community where they found a **sense of belonging**. This loss can leave students floundering, wondering who they are, who they’re becoming and where they fit.

Plus, their **sense of place** is now diminished because campus was where they spent much of their time and energy. Having to leave and find a new place will certainly take time.

Their **sense of independence** may feel stunted, too, as they acclimate to new living situations. Having to answer to others and take on different responsibilities will take some adjustment, for all involved.

And, then, of course, there’s the **sense of well-being** that is being compromised as we work to stay healthy and keep others well in the face of COVID-19. Economic difficulties, employment uncertainty, and the loss of anticipated gatherings and celebrations can leave all of us feeling traumatized and uneasy.

Mourning and grief make sense in the face of these losses and limitations. “We are in the first stages of grieving these ambiguous losses,”



wrote psychologist Lauren Rockwell for *The Mighty*. “An ambiguous loss is a loss we can’t quite get our hands around. The ambiguity speaks to the loss of dreams and futures imagined — the loss of things hoped for and for feelings anticipated. It’s the loss of those wispy, hard to get your hands around yet real beliefs about the metrics of the world. The loss of the steadfast feeling of our safety, and a sense that we live in a world where things are just, people do the right thing and rewards are fairly certain.”

And, as Rockwell said, “The grief attached to these things is real.”

So, as our students mourn the quick good-byes to friends, the uncertainty about when they’ll see each other again, the loss of their athletic seasons, missed celebrations and more, we

need to let them express their grief. Yes, their health is number one. Yet the accumulated losses are definitely significant, too.

“So grieve. Cry. Comfort one another,” Rockwell advised. “Discuss the sadness and anger... Recognize the complex intertwining of fear and anger and loss in all this.”

Source: *The Mighty*, March 2020

“It’s shattering to lose innocence, it’s traumatic to feel things were stolen from us and it is very sad to miss the things we hoped for and anticipated.”  
— Psychologist Lauren Rockwell in *The Mighty*, March 2020

## We’re Here For You

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, we are here to help. Please be in touch with any of your questions or concerns.





# Developing Resilience in Hard Times

Resilience is when we bounce back from failure and hard times. Kind of sounds familiar at the moment, doesn't it?

According to the campus Resilience Consortium, it includes capacities for...

- Persistence
- Creativity
- Emotional intelligence
- Grit
- Cognitive flexibility
- Risk-taking
- Adapting to change
- Delaying gratification
- Learning from failure
- Questioning success

This current pandemic situation and its associated issues can help students practice their resilience so they're better prepared to cope with

“Resilient people do not let adversity define them. They find resilience by moving towards a goal beyond themselves, transcending pain and grief by perceiving bad times as a temporary state of affairs... It's possible to strengthen your inner self and your belief in yourself, to define yourself as capable and competent. It's possible to fortify your psyche. It's possible to develop a sense of mastery.”

– “The Art of Resilience” by Hara Estroff Marano  
in *Psychology Today*

life's setbacks. You can help your student frame it this way by asking her to identify one of the above capacities and how she's currently putting it into practice. For instance, with “creativity” you could point out how she's creatively figuring ways to practice social cohesion with her friends, despite social distancing, through things like virtual game nights, FaceTime calls and Zoom study sessions.

This moment in time is now part of your student's story, where she gets to focus on *how* to get through it with strength, perseverance and, yes, resilience. As a result, she'll come out on the other side with some lifetime skills that will serve her *very* well.

**Sources:** <http://resilienceconsortium.bsc.harvard.edu>; <http://angeladuckworth.com>; *Developing GRIT: Resilience, Resourcefulness & Real Life* Brochure from PaperClip Communications

## Engaging in Successful Online Learning

Planning time to study in the middle of a busy household and being disciplined in keeping pace with online coursework may be new skillsets for your student.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers some great tips for making a successful transition to online learning. They include...

- Set study goals for each log-on or study session
- Create an area just for coursework with good lighting and study tools in one place
- Set up a schedule for when you plan to be “in class” online and when you'll study
- Participate consistently in online discussions
- Ask questions when things aren't clear and ask for help if you're struggling
- Look for ways to support your learning style – like practicing what you learn or joining a study group – if online learning doesn't meet all your needs

Check out the complete list of tips here: [www.unlv.edu/learn-online/tips](http://www.unlv.edu/learn-online/tips).

**Source:** “Tips for Success Online,” The University of Nevada, Las Vegas





# Cultivate Good Habits and Routines

In these uncertain times, cultivating good habits and routines is a way for students to invest in their success. Going about things willy-nilly, without any sort of routine, can be much more draining, not to mention the damage it can do to their productivity. It's one of the reasons that people who retire are often much happier and healthier if they put regular tasks into their schedules instead of facing wide gaps of unstructured time.

So, how can students cultivate a positive routine that'll work for them? Consider these steps from Inc....

- Start Your Day with a Positive Mantra to Set the Tone
- Make a Daily To-Do List

## Start Your Day in Proactive Mode

To start the day focused on your priorities, try not to check email or social media accounts first thing. If you do, other people's priorities then take over.

It doesn't mean you'll ignore these people and requests! It just means that your day will get off to a better, more productive start if you focus on your own priorities first.

- Mentally Prepare and Visualize Your Success
- Make Yourself Accountable by Finding a Partner or Mentor
- Prime Yourself for Creativity by Writing in a Journal or Just Jotting Things Down
- Take Regular Breaks Throughout the Day So You Don't Lose Focus
- Break Your Day into Chunks of Time to Maximize Your Output in Minimal Time

Source: Inc., 12/13/16

## Try the Simple, Effective Pomodoro Technique to Help Get Things Done

As students adapt to change and learn new ways to address their ever-changing To-Do lists these days, it can help to have a handy tool at the ready.

The Pomodoro Technique is a simple, popular time management strategy that can help students...

- Power through distractions
- Get hyper-focused
- Accomplish things in short bursts of time
- Be super-productive
- Improve attention span and concentration
- Take frequent breaks
- Be creative
- Stay motivated

To use the Pomodoro Technique...

- Break a large task into 25-minute timed sprints (or whatever timeframe works best)
- Set the timer and go
- During these timed intervals, focus intently, doing nothing but the task at hand, knowing there's a break soon to come
- Take a 5-minute break before plunging into the next Pomodoro
- Accomplish four Pomodoros and then take a longer break to recharge

Source: Lifehacker.com, 7/12/19

