



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

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Making Meaning During COVID-19

This forced slow-down we're in the middle of allows all of us to focus on what's most meaningful in our lives. You can help students gain this perspective by encouraging them to think about things like...

- Interests they're rekindling
- People they're reconnecting with
- Things they're missing
- Things they're *not* missing
- What they're grateful for

When they examine what they're learning about these kinds of things during a difficult time, it can help them find their better self. Plus, it's all part of formulating a Plan B since their initial Plan A was thrown off track. The secret to share, however, is

that many a Plan B turns out *way* better than the original!

So, with all the positivity they can summon, students can examine what's going *right* these days instead of always focusing on the tough stuff. As a result, they'll be healthier, more adaptable and in a much better place once the world reopens.

Embrace the Pause

You've all had to hit pause on your regularly scheduled life. So, how might you embrace the pause?

- Enjoy how it feels to quiet your mind when you're not so busy
- Reconnect with people in your life
- Start up a positive new habit that you've been putting off

And then, consider ways to incorporate more pauses into life when this current situation subsides. As the quote below says...

"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to."

– Dave Hollis

Coping Mechanism: Focus on Gratitude

Anxiety, stress, fear and anger can be contagious, especially during an unprecedented situation like the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, kindness is contagious, too.

So, now and then, encourage students to focus on the goodness and kindness they've witnessed during this time. What have they seen? What have they experienced? By examining what they're grateful for – in their own space and in their own way – students are more likely to make it through this with their better selves firmly intact.





Will It Ever Be the Same?

Some students may be asking this question, wondering if their college lives will ever be the same again. That's natural, since they likely had to leave friends, faculty and staff who made them feel connected, as well as leaving places and involvements they enjoyed.

The hard answer is that things won't ever be exactly the same. They can't be after all we've gone through during the coronavirus pandemic. Yet, disruptions like COVID-19 can really cause us to look at what matters and how we want to approach life from this point forward.

This perspective can lead to interesting conversation with students, as they ponder...

- The types of people connections they'd like to foster
- How they'll approach their academics moving ahead
- What types of things they'd like to spend their time on outside of class
- The main reasons they're going to college in the first place

So, consider posing these questions to students as you help them embrace change and put their best foot forward.



A Focus on What's Going Right

When we reframe negative thoughts to instead focus on things that are going well, we can often counteract "negative thought creep." This is a helpful tactic to share with your student during this tough time.

For instance, encourage them to think about five things that went right today. Maybe they're collaborating with classmates and feeling productive. Or they had an awesome grapefruit for breakfast that tasted

so good. Or they were able to bring a smile to a grocery store cashier's face when they thanked her for being so brave.

By listing what's going well, we're able to cultivate gratitude and flip the switch from "all negative all the time" to a perspective of balance. And that's going to help all of us get through these difficult days in much healthier ways.



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.





Getting Good, Quality Sleep During a Pandemic

We know, we know, that's so much easier said than done, especially during this anxious, tossing-and-turning time. Yet, good, quality sleep is undeniably one of the main ways for people to boost their immunity so their bodies are ready to fight off infection. So, it's well worth looking at the sleep facts.

The New York Times offers some of the tried and true sleep tips, like creating and maintaining a consistent sleep practice, setting an electronics curfew 90 minutes before bed and exercising to tire yourself out. Yet, the paper also offers some other insights that may be unique to these current times, such as...

- Don't consume your news right before bed
- Give order to the day by setting up plans of action before lights out, since anxiety can often erupt in the dark

"Sleep is an essential part of protection from and response to any infection."

– Dr. Douglas B. Kirsch, a neurologist and former president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

- Get sleep while you can, even if it's during the day, but don't let naps wreck your schedule
- Treat your cycle of anxiety with gratitude, breathing, meditation and more
- Don't drink yourself to sleep or eat too close to bedtime
- Wash your sheets regularly
- Take a hot shower or bath 90 minutes before bed

And, if you're battling an infection, your body needs additional rest to heal quickly, the *Times* reports. Dr. Michael Breus, a clinical

psychologist who focuses on the link between behavior and sleep, recommends increasing your total sleep time by two hours if you're sick.

Take this into consideration, as reported by the *Times*: "A 2015 study found a direct link between shorter sleep times and an increased risk of getting a cold for healthy adults ages 18 to 55; specifically those sleeping less than five hours or between five and six hours had a greater likelihood of catching a virus than those sleeping for seven hours a night."

Source: *The New York Times*, 3/25/20

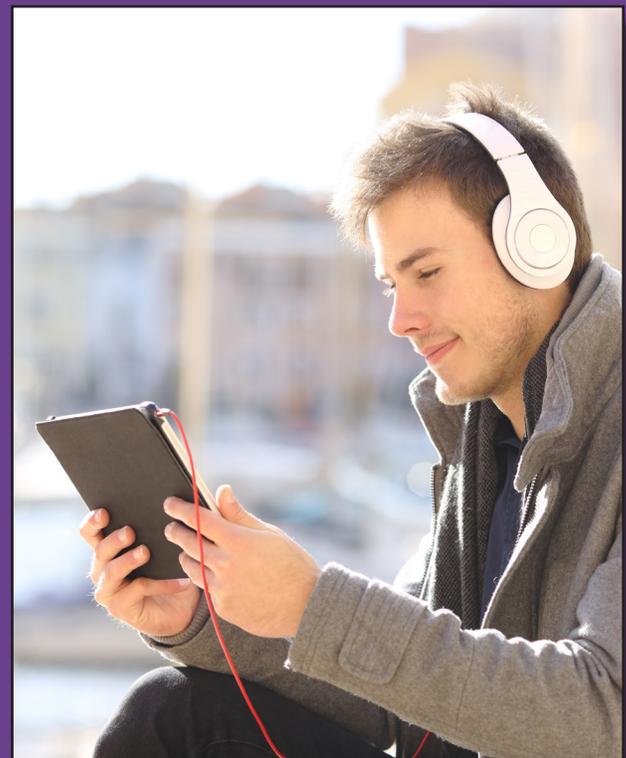
Tap into the Familiar

There's something so soothing about the familiar. It's known, comforting and ready to make you feel better at the drop of a hat.

You and your family can consider tapping into that familiarity to counterbalance this time of uncertainty. Pick up a book you loved reading the first time around and give it another go. Watch a familiar TV show or movie that you know boosts your endorphins. Read a poem or saying that gives you peace.

The comforting thing is that you likely know how you're going to feel after tapping into the familiar. And at a time when so much feels out of control, this is one thing you can all control in the pursuit of self-care.

And check out this list of "20 Movies with Extremely Happy Endings" to help in this pursuit: <https://bit.ly/2Rw97u4>.





Embracing the Joy of Missing Out

FOMO – or the Fear Of Missing Out – runs strong and mighty among campus community members these days. It’s why social media use is at such a high. And when we’re amid a crisis like the coronavirus that has disrupted life as we know it, FOMO can rise to unhealthy stakes.

So, what can we do about that, to ease the FOMO angst and turn it around? Consider touting the virtues of JOMO – or the Joy Of Missing Out. According to author Kristen Fuller, M.D., in *Psychology Today*...

“JOMO (the joy of missing out) is the emotionally intelligent antidote to FOMO and is essentially about being present and being content with where you are at in life. You do not need to compare your life to others but instead, practice tuning out the background noise of the ‘shoulds’ and ‘wants’ and learn to let go of worrying whether you are doing something wrong.

“JOMO allows us to live life in the slow lane, to appreciate human connections, to be intentional with our time, to practice saying ‘no,’ to give ourselves ‘tech-free breaks,’ and to give us permission to acknowledge where we are and to feel emotions,

whether they are positive or negative. Instead of constantly trying to keep up with the Jones’, JOMO allows us to be who we are in the present moment, which is the secret to finding happiness. When you free up that competitive and anxious space in your brain, you have so much more time, energy and emotion to conquer your true priorities.”

To embrace JOMO, the article in *Psychology Today* suggests...

- **Being Intentional with Time.** Make *your* time a priority and schedule things that are important to you.
- **Giving Yourself Permission to Live in the Present.** When having a bad day, be easy on yourself and when having a good day, celebrate.
- **Embracing Tech-free Time.** FOMO can be triggered by too much social media usage, so set daily limits.



- **Practicing Saying “No.”** If you feel saying “yes” could have a negative impact on you, show yourself self-care and self-love by saying “no.”
- **Experiencing Real Life.** Choose to disconnect from the drama of social media, emails and texts so you can enjoy real life pleasures like going outside, cooking and spending time with loved ones.
- **Slowing Down.** This can increase our creativity, help us think before we speak and embrace the quiet.

Tapping into JOMO now may help us keep a better balance when the world returns to a new normal.

Source: *Psychology Today*, 7/26/18

Bust Out the Sidewalk Chalk

The #ChalkTheWalk and #ChalkYourWalk movements are gaining momentum across the U.S., as people use sidewalk chalk to leave one another uplifting messages. For instance...

- Neighborhoods are creating driveway art galleries
- People are writing thank yous for health care workers
- Others are turning hospital sidewalks into “red carpets” to honor health care workers as they head inside

Or some individuals just carry sidewalk chalk in their cars so they can leave driveway and sidewalk messages for others on-the-go!

You can see some examples of sidewalk chalk art being used to lift others up here: <https://wb.md/3aV6REd>.

