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Navigating Your Mental Health During COVID-19 Isolation or Quarantine

The University of Denver Health and Counseling Center (HCC) is here to support you and your mental health as you navigate COVID-19 isolation and/or quarantine through consultation and support, ongoing mental health services, and/or assistance with connecting to a provider in the community. To schedule an appointment please call the HCC main phone line 303-871-2205 or web-book an appointment through MyHealth Portal accessed through <https://www.du.edu/health-and-counseling-center/>. If you are experiencing an urgent mental health concern and wish to speak to a counselor immediately, please contact the HCC on-call counselor at 303-871-2205. A HCC on-call counselor is available 24/7.

- The HCC will be offering a single session drop in workshop *Optimizing Mental Health and Wellbeing While in Quarantine or Isolation*- Each Tuesday from 9am-10am starting September 22, 2020. Please call the HCC 303-871-2205 or secure message Jennifer Schroeder, LCSW through MyHealth if you would like to be added to the workshop for the week and a zoom link will be provided in your MyHealth Portal.

Recognizing distress while in quarantine or isolation

- Increased worry, fearfulness, or feelings of being overwhelmed
- Feelings of fatigue or exhaustion that persist and/or intensify
- Inability to focus or concentrate that may be accompanied by decreased academic performance
- A feeling of hopelessness and/or a paralyzing fear about the future
- Sudden anger, sadness, irritability, or noticeable changes in personality
- Sleep difficulties or change in appetite
- Increased unhealthy coping behaviors (e.g., increased alcohol or drug use, engaging in impulsive behaviors)

Online Resources:

- My Student Support Program (My SSP) – download from your app store on your phone or visit their website at us.myissp.com and select University of Denver to initiate services. You can participate in support services via chat, phone or through video.
- The National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-TALK) offers free and confidential support for people in distress and prevention and crisis resources. <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990

Coping strategies to help you F.A.C.E. C.O.V.I.D.*

F.A.C.E. C.O.V.I.D. is an acronym that outlines practical steps that you can take as you navigate the challenges of self-isolation/quarantine from COVID-19, and the mental health difficulties that it may present. Taking these steps will assist you to cope with the uncertainty you are facing and build upon the resiliency you already hold as you embark on this process. These steps are **not** meant to replace meeting with a medical and/or mental health professional.

F= Focus on what you can control

-Navigating these challenges can make you feel powerless. Focusing on what you can control is empowering. The alternative to uncontrollable worry is to focus on what actually is in your control, and we have control over what we do right **here and now**.

-This might be focusing on sleep quality and nutrition, scheduling phone calls and virtual check-ins with loved ones, writing out your thoughts in a daily journal, watching television or listening to music.



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A= Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

-The more we tell ourselves not to think or feel a certain way, the more we will feel and think that way!

-It can be a powerful shift to choose to simply acknowledge whatever thoughts, feelings, physical sensations or urges are rising up inside of you.

C= Connect with your body

-Following your health care provider's guidelines regarding physical activity comes first and foremost. The following activities are not meant to be a workout, instead connecting with your body is an opportunity to physically experience how these simple actions are things in your control. Mindful stretching and mindful body scans can help calm your system.

E= Expand and engage your senses

-When we engage all of our senses, we can help shift our mind from worries to placing our full attention on the present moment—the only point in time where we have some control.

-A helpful tool to shift your attention from your internal experience to your immediate surroundings is by engaging in what we call a “grounding technique.” See if you can notice: ...**5** different colors that you can see...**4** things that you can physically sense/touch ...**3** different sounds (not you) ...**2** things you can possibly smell...**1** thing you can possibly taste. This simple **5-4-3-2-1** exercise helps to ground our body and experience in the current situation and helps to root us in the present moment where anxiety holds less power.

C= Connect with others

-Though physically connecting with others is not possible at this time, it is all the more important to practice being intentional in connecting with others through technology.

-We as humans are hard-wired for connection. Identify 2-3 people with whom you can connect at set times during the day.

O= Open Up

-Gently opening up to the difficult thoughts and feelings of worry, fear, anger, grief, guilt, loneliness, confusion...or whatever else you might be noticing can provide a space for you to process the weight these emotions can carry. -Rely on the supports around you here at Northwestern and beyond with medical personnel, mental health professional(s), family, friends, and/or loved ones.

V= View yourself and others with compassion

-Often times when we hear the word self-compassion, we think it is the opposite of being strong and resilient, when in fact self-compassion is a courageous act of vulnerability and kindness towards ourselves.

I= Identify your values

-Values are the things that matter most to us. Values are not goals to accomplish or even ways that we want to feel. Instead, values describe the type of person we want to be and the direction we want to head in life.

-What do you value? How do you want to treat yourself and others?

D= Do what matters

-Remember **action** can be the antidote to **anxiety**. Take this time to experiment with new coping strategies, ways of thinking, and/or getting connected with additional supports.

*F.A.C.E. C.O.V.I.D. strategies and resources adapted in part from Russ Harris, M.D., www.actmindfully.com.au

*Document adapted from Northwestern University CAPS