

# Tips & Recommendations for Managing Distress Related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Recent news reports about COVID-19, travel restrictions, and concerns for our own and our loved ones' health may contribute to increased mental and emotional health distress. As information about COVID-19 unfolds, there can be a wide range of thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Below is some helpful information and resources.

## Common Reactions

Please recognize that there can be a wide range of reactions and that over the next few days or weeks you may experience periods of:

- Difficulty concentrating and sleeping
- Hyper-vigilance to your health and body
- Anxiety, worry, panic
- Feeling helplessness
- Social withdrawal
- Anger

## When to Seek Help

Please reach out to our office or other campus resources if you (or another student you know) are experiencing any of the following:

- Excessive worry, fear, and/or feelings of being “stressed” or overwhelmed.
- Persistent sadness, tearfulness, and/or loss of interest in pleasurable activities.
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or dread about the future.
- Unexplained physical symptoms, such as upset stomach, increased heart rate, nausea, fatigue, etc.
- Increased anger, irritability, agitation, and/or disruptive behaviors.
- Inability to concentrate or focus.
- Significant changes in sleep, appetite, and/or self-care.
- Social isolation or withdrawal.
- Fear or avoidance of public spaces.
- Thoughts about death, dying, and/or suicide.
- Impulsive, reckless, or risky behaviors (substance abuse, self-injury, etc.).

## Tips for Managing Emotional/Psychological Distress

Although COVID-19 is a health issue that is being taken very seriously by the campus and public health authorities worldwide, do not let your worry about this virus control your life. There are many simple and effective ways to manage your fears and anxieties. Many of them are essential ingredients for a healthy lifestyle; adopting them can help improve your overall emotional and physical well-being.

- Acknowledge your feelings and emotions.** Allow yourself time to reflect on what you are feeling and how you may be reacting to or coping with these feelings.
- Try to maintain your normal day-to-day activities and routines.**
- Stay connected.** Resist withdrawing and isolating yourself from your family and friends. Maintaining social connections can foster a sense of normality and provide valuable opportunities for sharing your feelings and relieving stress.

•**Keep things in perspective.** Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage. Although you'll want to keep informed — especially if you have loved ones in affected countries — remember to take a break from watching the news and focus on the things that are positive in your life and things you have control over.

•**Seek accurate information from credible news sources.** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, has a webpage dedicated to providing factual information on the novel coronavirus (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>). You may also find useful information from local or state public health agencies.

•**Limit exposure to social media and news outlets** that do not provide any new information and/or sensationalizes the facts. Pay attention to positive news instead of only focusing on negative and fear-producing reports.

•**Stay healthy.** Adopting healthy hygienic habits such as washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, frequently, and certainly after sneezing or before/after touching your face or a sick person. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Avoid contact with others who are sick and stay home while sick.

•**Follow protection and prevention tips provided by qualified medical professionals, including from UHCL Health Services [www.uhcl.edu/healthservices](http://www.uhcl.edu/healthservices)**

### Mutual Trust, Respect, Civility, & Dignity

The Counseling and Mental Health Center is aware that fear and anxiety can lead to mistrust, bias, prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping and micro-aggressions, which we are committed to proactively combating. In an effort to maintain and promote mutual trust, respect, civility, and dignity in our community, please consider practicing the following:

- Be mindful of your assumptions about others. Someone who has a cough or a fever does not necessarily have COVID-19. Self-awareness is important in not stigmatizing others in our community.
- Be mindful of your behaviors, thoughts, beliefs, and/or biases about Chinese international students, faculty, and staff.
- Avoid making generalizations about students, faculty, or staff who may be sick, protecting themselves from getting sick, and/or from abroad.
- Resist any impulse to avoid Chinese international students, faculty or staff.
- Practice and seek good healthcare if you believe you are sick.
- Listen and attend to each other with empathy, kindness, and compassion.

### More Resources

**Students** - For students interested in support please contact the Counseling and Mental Health Center located in SSCB 3103. To talk to a therapist during business hours call (281) 283-2580. If you are experiencing a mental health emergency when the Counseling and Mental Health Center is closed call (281) 283-2580 and press 2 to speak with an after-hours mental health counselor.

**Faculty & Staff** - To access free, confidential services through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) call (713) 500-3327 or visit the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) online at [www.mylifevalues.com](http://www.mylifevalues.com). When prompted for the user name and password, enter "uhs/uhs".

UHCL Counseling and Mental Health Center

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[www.uhcl.edu/cmhc](http://www.uhcl.edu/cmhc)

281.283.2580