

MENTAL HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

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Some resources around anxiety and mental health during this turbulent moment.

ANXIETY

When it comes to keeping anxiety at bay, there are several important guidelines to follow:

Anxiety feeds off of the changes that we are forced to make in our routines. Keep your normal sleep, eating, and exercise schedules. Check out [JED Campus TIPS for Self-Care](#).

Anxiety feeds off of the unknown. Worry tends to turn into rumination, which in turn amplifies symptoms of anxiety.

- *Approach the unknown as problem solving-* when a worry thought enters your mind, turn your mind to a curious observation and write down the thought on paper. Return when you have time to put proper attention to it. If it is still important, problem solve.
- *Label the thought as a “worry thought.”* Labeling thoughts helps to regulate them. When we can notice our thoughts arising as cognitive processes rather than fused with any truth or certainty, then we can provide cognitive distance. Remember, worry thoughts are the mind’s way of telling ourselves to attend to something.
- *Notice in your body where anxiety lives.* Noticing where the body holds your anxiety helps you to focus on identifying physiological symptoms and provides cognitive distance. Label those physiological symptoms as anxiety symptoms. Remind yourself they are there to indicate that you may need to be prepared.
- *Limit your researching behavior.* Anxiety is never satisfied with the amount, quality, or frequency of data gathering. Strictly limit your researching to 15 minutes per day. Set a timer on your phone.

Focus on the work that matters to you!

Anxiety is amplified by avoidance of safe situations. It is important that you follow university guidelines and policies for precautions as these set the boundaries for what is in and out of bounds. Anxiety causes people to not only overestimate the probability of something bad happening, it causes people to imagine the worst. To combat problematic avoidance:

- *Follow university guidelines to tell you what is in and out of bounds.* This includes social distancing, washing hands frequently, staying home if you have any symptoms for anyone not at high-risk. For individuals who are at high-risk or live with someone at high-risk, this may mean self-isolating until further guidelines are put forth.
- *Seek advice from others.* Follow the guidance of administrators and colleagues, and determine what makes most sense for you. You will know what is helping or making

things worse -- the level of symptoms tells you.

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK HELP?

If you are experiencing panic attacks, debilitating anxiety, loss of sleep, or severe symptoms that feel unmanageable and are preventing you from functioning in any domain of your life, it may be time to seek help. This is the first time in our lifetime that these types of measures have been put in place at this scale in the United States. For our alarm bells to be screaming and us to not know how to soften them is totally normal.

Anyone who is already managing an existing mental health condition should prioritize self-care during difficult times, continue their treatment plan, and stay in contact with their mental health team.

FACULTY & STAFF RESOURCES

- The Staff and Faculty Assistance Program (SFAP) is provided by [Perspectives Ltd.](#) to assist you and your family members with the challenges of daily living. The program is confidential, available 24/7 and provides a variety of services. Visit UChicago's [Staff and Faculty Assistance Program](#) page or call 800.456.6327.
- Health Insurance Provider. Faculty and staff may contact their health insurance provider at the number found on the back of their insurance card.
- *Psychology Today*. You can visit [Psychology Today](#) to search for providers in your area, by insurance, and specialty.
- SAMHSA's National Helpline. Call the helpline for referrals 24/7 at 1-800-622-4357 (TTY 1-800-487-4889).

STUDENT RESOURCES

- [Wellness@UChicago](#). Students should refer to the Student Health and Counseling Services for their medical and [mental health](#) needs. Contact 773.702.9800 to make an appointment with a therapist. Check their [Resources](#) page and their [Mental Health Resource Guide](#).
- Students on the University Student Health Insurance Plan (U-SHIP) may reach a doctor 24/7 by visiting [telehealth4students.com](#) or calling 855-866-0895. Students not on U-SHIP may use this option for a small fee; however, students not on U-SHIP should contact their insurance provider, as many insurance companies offer low- or no-cost telemedicine options.
- Health Insurance Provider. Students may contact their student health insurance provider at the number found on the back of their insurance card.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Students in mental health emergencies can contact that [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255 (TTY 1-800-799-4889) and be connected with a local provider.

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- **Urgent Medical Care**
Nurse Line: 773-702-4156
Emergency: 911
- **Urgent Mental Health Care**
After-hours therapist: 773-702-3625
Emergency: 911
- **Dean on Call**
773-834-HELP (4357) The [Dean on Call](#) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **UCPD**
773-702-8181 or 911

VIDEO RESOURCES

- [Quick Expert Tips to Manage Coronavirus Anxiety Part Two](#) - ADAA video - ADAA members Ken Goodman, LCSW, Drs. Debra Kissen, Reid Wilson, and Sally Winston share expert tips to manage coronavirus anxiety.
- [Quick Expert Tips and Strategies to Manage Coronavirus Anxiety](#) - ADAA 5 minute Video - ADAA member Dr. Debra Kissen

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has guidance on [managing mental health](#) and coping during COVID-19 for children and caregivers, as well as guidance for [higher education administrators](#).
- The [Chicago Department of Public Health](#) provides guidance, services, and strategies that make Chicago a healthier and safer city.
- The [Child Mind Institute](#) has published a resource on how to talk to young people about COVID-19.
- The [Hope Center](#) has outlined resources for supporting college students during this crisis.
- The [American College Health Association](#) has created a guide to help college health staff and campus administrators address COVID-19 on campus.
- The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) has information on travel, media resources, and other research on COVID-19.
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America Psychologist Jelena Kexmanovic provides some [science-based strategies and tips](#) for coping with COVID-19 anxiety.

Remember, we are all in this together, focus on what can be done in this moment, and stay connected to the people that matter most to you.

We'd like to thank the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis for allowing us to copy much of this page from their website.



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