



Washington
University in St. Louis

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dear Students,

There are many unsettling transitions happening in such a short period of time, and I want to reiterate to you that putting your health and safety and that of our greater community is the university's highest priority. What we are all seeing unfold regarding COVID-19, along with the resulting university decisions, may result in feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, fear and many others. Worrying about a potential risk to your health and safety or that of your loved ones is normal and common. Your fear and anxiety are valid—these times can feel scary and uncertain. It is a reminder of our interconnectedness and a reminder to take better care of each other and to check in with our own mental health.

If you are feeling anxious about COVID-19, here are a few recommendations for how to manage stress in uncertain times.

- *Create structure and routine where you can—so much is out of your control right now. If you can, try establishing the following:*
 - *Establish a daily & weekly routine for yourself*
 - *Set a schedule and daily goals*
 - *Keep up on personal hygiene and get dressed as you normally would*
- *Engage in healthy habits – definitely continue to wash your hands and also continue to take care of your health by:*
 - *Getting 7-8 hours of sleep*
 - *Eating well*
 - *Making time for movement (walk outside, check out free yoga or exercise videos on YouTube)*
- *Avoid unhealthy coping strategies—as tempting as they may be, overuse of the following won't help cope with big emotions:*
 - *Alcohol and other drugs*
 - *Junk food*
 - *Sleeping all day*
 - *Social media*
 - *Compulsive spending*
- *Focus on what you can influence—so much can feel out of your control right now. What can you influence?*
 - *Washing your hands*
 - *The amount of news media you consume*
 - *Taking full, deep breaths periodically*
 - *Make a list of what else is in your power and focus on those*

Find things to do that nurture your mind and spirit. Ted Talks, books that inspire you and journaling activities. Make time for tasks that allow for hope and future planning even if it is

- uncertain when some things may happen. Engage with life around you with intentionality and being present.
- **Unplug**—limit the amount of time you devote to stressful news coverage:
 - Set a time, and give yourself that amount of time once or twice a day
 - When you do pay attention to news, make sure you are consulting reputable sources with solid medical and public health backing. We would suggest the university's [COVID-19 information website](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control website](#) as useful resources. (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).
 - **Connect with your support system**—reach out to folks who support and energize you
 - Be open about how you're feeling and hold this space for others as well
 - Find ways to positively support one another
 - Schedule regular video chats or phone calls to check in
 - **Tap into this moment**—being mindful won't make your anxiety go away, but it can change your relationship to it
 - Consider utilizing a mindfulness app
 - Consider joining a virtual guided mindfulness meditation through Instagram Live (@WashU_Habif) on Mondays at 4:00 PM (CST)

If you are utilizing the strategies above and find that your anxiety is difficult to manage, or if you are even wondering if you should reach out for help, you should. Seeking help is not always our first impulse. By the time this occurs to you, it is time to ask. Please see some of those counseling and support resources below.

Take good care and let us know what we can do to help. We care about you.

Sincerely,



M. Kirk Dougher, PhD
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Support and Wellness
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HELPFUL RESOURCES

Habif Health and Wellness Center

314-935-6666

students.wustl.edu/habif-health-wellness-center/

- Habif will remain open the week of March 16: 8 am-5 pm Mon-Thurs 9-5 Fridays, Sat 9-1
- During the week of March 23 and beyond, Habif's hours will be 9 am-4 pm Mon-Fri, Sat 9-1

Habif Medical

- If students are having any symptoms of fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, they should contact the Habif Center before seeking in-person medical care in any location.

Habif Mental Health

- Students seeking mental health support can call the Mental Health Services Coordinator at 314-935-6695 for assistance. We will be available Monday-Friday 8 am-5 pm.
- Psychiatrists are able to consult with students and can provide refills of medication in almost all cases. Students should contact their psychiatrist with any questions/needs.

- We are calling all students who currently have scheduled appointments to check in, assess need, and offer support.
- Our Care Manager is available to students in need of assistance finding services close to home. Provident, our after-hours call line is available usual. It can be reached at 5-6666.
- TAO is a seven-to-nine-week, interactive, web-based program that provides well-researched and highly effective strategies to help overcome anxiety, depression and other common concerns. This may be especially helpful during these times of ambiguity students.wustl.edu/therapist-assisted-online/
- We are developing plans for offering on-line consultation services, in accordance with psychologist/counselor/clinical social worker licensing regulations and to ensure HIPAA compliance, and confidentiality. Once availability is finalized, more information will be posted at students.wustl.edu/habif-health-wellness-center/.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention

314-935-3445

students.wustl.edu/relationship-sexual-violence-prevention-center/

- RSVP Center plans to offer the following:
 - We will remain open Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm.
 - Our 24/7 on call services will continue.
 - For an appointment, email rsvpcenter@wustl.edu
 - For more information about online support and national support resources, visit: students.wustl.edu/relationship-sexual-violence-support-resources/#community
- We are encouraging students to utilize TAO, Therapy Assisted Online, for additional support related to anxiety, depression and other common concerns. students.wustl.edu/therapist-assisted-online/
- We are calling all students who currently have scheduled appointments to check in, assess need, and offer support. We will assist students outside the St. Louis area in identifying providers in their respective locations.
- We are developing plans for offering on-line consultation services, in accordance with psychologist/counselor/clinical social worker licensing regulations and to ensure HIPAA compliance, and confidentiality. Once availability is finalized, more information will be posted at students.wustl.edu/relationship-sexual-violence-prevention-center/

WashU Cares

314-935-2595 or email Laura Sandoval-Sweeney at laura.sandoval@wustl.edu

students.wustl.edu/washu-cares/

- Connections with students who might have needs/concerns can be made through Zoom or phone conversations.
- Referrals can be made through our networks to providers that are local to a student's permanent hometown.
- For students who are having general distress about COVID-19, they are welcome and encouraged to call.

Other Resources

- There are many helpful guides online on various ways to manage stress and anxiety related to COVID-19. Here are a few we've found most useful:

- *Mental Health Guidance for Managing [sites.wustl.edu/takingcare/ Coping with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak](https://sites.wustl.edu/takingcare/Coping-with-Stress-During-the-2019-nCoV-Outbreak) (WHO)*
- *[Taking Care of Your Mental Health in the Face of Uncertainty](#) (AFSP)*
- *[5 Tips to Help Regain Calm Amidst COVID-19 Panic](#) (NPR)*
- *[How to Cope with Anxiety About Coronavirus](#) (Verywell Mind)*
- *[Feeling Anxiety About Coronavirus? A Psychologist Offers Tips to Stay Clearheaded](#) (UCSF)*
- *In uncertain times, mindfulness and meditation can be excellent, evidence-based ways to manage stress and better understand your emotions. Learn more on Habif's [Mindfulness and Meditation](#) page.*