

Destressing Strategies and Suggestions

We recognize that students are experiencing stress related to school-personal life balance, the political climate, and rapid changes in policy that impact many in our communities. Thus, this guide is to serve as suggestions for destressing.

Destressing reminders:

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- Self-Care – We often stress this but it can sometimes feel challenging to find the time and energy to practice. Remember that self-care strategies can range from free to really expensive; the range is vast. The same goes with the amount of time you put into self-care; ample time to a few minutes.
 - o Find something that make you laugh every day! Lightness and humor heals.
 - o Identify things you are grateful for. Gratitude practice is very personal. There are times when the struggle is real and it's challenging to find something to be grateful for but even a few things each day can help. Work towards identifying 3 things that you are grateful that happened and 3 people you are grateful for each day.
- Deep Breathes - Seems simple enough but it really does help to re-center you.
 - o Try taking a couple deep breathes before you go into class or shift gears to a new task.
 - o Your body can't be relaxed and anxious at the same time.

History – The times we are living in may be new but many of today's struggles are not. It's helpful to connect with your community members - particularly community elders to get their input and learn about their pasts.

Digital Consumption

- o If not daily, weekly unplug from everything electronic, especially social media, which can be never ending.
- o Ask yourself - What is your bandwidth and how much can you take on? Often times, we consume more than we can digest.
- o Ask yourself- What am I going to do with the amount of bandwidth I do have, today? Take an assessment throughout the day and even throughout the week as your consumption levels can vary.
- o Example: bandwidth for marching with others in the Womxn march will be different that day than the day after. The day after, you may need a day to yourself to rest and recover.
- o Give yourself time outs. Sometimes your body recognizes that you have maxed out your consumption or energy levels before your brain does.
- o We're so active on social media that it becomes intuitive so it is hard for us to recognize when we are over consuming.
- o Goal is to never get "Thanksgiving" full (in other words over stuffed) of social media and media, in general. When we are full, we often don't notice. It's like asking a fish in water, "What's water?"

Collective Care – How am I taking care of others and how others are taking care of me? This is your community.

- o It's a balance of taking care of others and people taking care of you.

- Identify your indicators/sensors that tell you that you done a lot or consumed a ton. In these situations, it's good to have a mirror, which is a person who can identify different behaviors or habits when you're inching towards overload and remind you if you are looking tense.
- Find someone who can talk to with some neutrality not necessarily a therapist but people who are like-minded.
- In addition to having people who are like-minded, you want to diversify your network.
 - Example: In grad school, it's great to have people who understand what you are going through. At the same time, sometimes you need to get away and not talk about school and your professional realm.
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Advocacy/Activism

- Identify what works for you.
- Advocacy/activism is a form of self-care and a way for you to engage with a community.
- Activism and volunteering is a different type of care as in it feeds your soul and community and will required different self-care afterwards
- Marches and similar events are not everyone's cup of tea and that's okay.
- Other examples of ways you can get involved:
 - Reframing self-care as an act of resistance and activism.
 - Supporting organizations that are in trouble is another form of activism.
 - You can donate time, money or signatures
 - Writing to senators – letters are often pre-drafted on social media
 - Serving on a School board
 - Support organizations that are endangered
 - Being mindful of where you shop or protesting a brand is another way of activism.
 - www.Resistancemanual.org

Balancing & Boundaries

- It's easy to say oh that is the thing (self-care) that I do when I get home but rather we need to be intentional throughout the day.
- What are those things that are simplistic and have a cost but worth the investment?
 - Example: A friend bought a nice coffee maker so it makes coffee the same time her alarm goes off. Thus, the smell of coffee resonates with it's time to get up.
 - A brief walk is another example that can break up the day and reset you.
- Work/life balance is kind of a myth. Systems in society often don't promote self-care in practice. Rather, it's more like a rocking chair and you can often get stuck too far forward or too far back.
 - Finding the balance between work and play is like riding a surf board. Riding the wave can sometimes be tough and you need to find that rhythm.
- Society and social pressure often places a lot of pressure on you saying that you should be able to balance x, y, and z.
 - Example: technology. Now you can do it all with one device! Why?! No, you shouldn't. We can't do it all at once and our performance actually suffers when we multi-task
 - Focus on one task at a time and then move on. This is called uni-tasking.

- How to overcome an undesirable task – the 2nd it comes to your awareness, get it done versus all the time you aren't doing it and fiddling with other things. In fact, while you are fiddling, you aren't relaxed because you know you have to get it done and your anxiety is cultivating
 - Example: instead of writing that paper, I'm going to watch Netflix. A few hours later, the paper still isn't done and you still aren't relaxed because in the back of your head, your conscious is saying "hey, you have that paper" "when are you going to start that paper?" "paper. Paper. Paper"
- When you make a plan to study from 7pm-9pm, you have to be more specific about what you will accomplish and re-evaluate what's realistic.
- Evaluate ideal "self" vs actual "self" for planning purposes.
 - Example: Perfect Charisse will work out in the morning, drink green tea, meditate, and get ready all before work. Actual Charisse will make it to the gym.
 - You are your own worst critic and stop being so hard on yourself.
- Divisions of Labor
 - You have a lot of different roles (perhaps a son/daughter, student, partner, etc.) If all of your roles made up a pie, how big of a piece would you allocate to each role? Likely, you are allocating a lot to the role as a student. And for now, you likely have to make some sacrifices and slim down the responsibilities for your other roles temporarily.
- FOMO didn't exist 10+ years ago (2007).
 - People's social circles were significant smaller because it was harder to be in communication constantly. It's okay if you miss out on things whether it's constant news information or an event. There will always be more events and you'll get the news update eventually. By focusing on what's in front of you, you may actually feel more connected!
 - Example: Sally had a baby. But if I don't check social media, I wouldn't have known that. In reality, you would find out at some point by communicating with Sally and you can actually plan to spend time with them in-person versus converse about this via social media.
 - Give yourself the experience of missing out on things. It won't be the end of the world.
- Comparisons
 - We often don't know what everyone is experiencing and people have different strengths and challenges. Comparing yourself to your peers can be a slippery slope. Instead, compare yourself to an older version of yourself.
 - Example: Sally got a 90% on the exam while I only got a 70%. On the next exam, Sally got a 72% and I got a 75%. Sally still did better. In reality, you are improving while Sally regressed and comparisons make it hard to see the progress you have made. And, really, a year from now that exam grade will be a distant memory!

A few other resources:

- Real Happiness at Work by Sharon Salzberg
- Real Happiness by Sharon Salzberg
- The Gifts of Imperfection by Brené Brown

- https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability
- Passion Planner: <http://www.passionplanner.com/>
- Headspace App
- Stop, Breathe & Think App
- On Demand Podcast

- *There are a few examples provided that touch upon the rapid changes the USA is facing politically as our country has become very divided. Examples and strategies can be applied in multiple situations and are not intended to serve as the political stances of the University of Washington, School of Social Work, or Counseling Center. We respect everyone's beliefs and opinions.*

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