

COVID-19: Caring for your mental wellness

It is the need of the hour to confine ourselves within the four-walls of our home to contain the spread of Coronavirus. However, it is not easy to practice self-isolation and cope up with the country wide lockdown and restrictions. Though we are distressed to witness the effects of the spread of COVID-19 and related uncertainties, we are not used and normally don't like to confine ourselves with restrictions. The mental toll of the coronavirus pandemic is unfolding inside homes all around us, as students, parents and teachers learn to deal with a new norm of social distancing and remote learning. For students, it is abrupt disruption of their college experiences including events, rituals and ceremonies that make their adrenaline flow high. Transition from an eventful and routine college life to social distancing is not easy because it is mixed with a feeling of disbelief, disappointment and sadness among students. However, remember that you are not alone and in this period of adjustment, almost everyone in this world is there with you. Try to be calm, patient and realize that it is a temporary phase.

Following are some suggestions we would like you to follow for mental wellness during this difficult period. Many of these suggestions are essential ingredients for a healthy lifestyle. Adopting them can help improve your overall emotional, physical, and mental well-being.

1. Set boundaries

Let your family know your online class schedule and when you'll be engaging in virtual class or assignments. To the best of your ability, find private, quiet places in your home to be alone at the time of doing your work. Keep your family's schedule consistent when it comes to bedtimes, meals, and exercise. Modify your daily activities to meet the current reality of the situation and focus on what you can accomplish. Shift expectations and priorities to focus more on what gives you meaning, purpose, or fulfilment. Give yourself small breaks from the stress of the situation.

2. Stay connected to your friends

Your family doesn't have to be your only social interaction each day. Stay in touch with friends through texting, phone calls, and video chat, to support you and be supported. Talk about your feelings to them as often as possible. While we may not have all the answers about what happens next, verbalizing our concerns with others can help ease the strain. You can also contact your faculties via email or phone for a discussion on the topic you are studying. Maintaining social networks can help maintain a sense of normalcy, and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress.

3. Create a conducive home environment

Make time to do things at home that have made you and your family feel better in other stressful situations, such as reading, watching movies, listening to music, playing board-games, exercising, or engaging in religious activities (prayer, participating in services on the Internet). Make even smaller contributions in parent's regular activities such as setting home, making beds, help in cooking, preparing and serving soft drinks. It will make your presence felt and at the same time make the environment lighter. Recognize that feelings such as loneliness, boredom, fear of contracting disease, anxiety, stress, and panic are normal reactions to a stressful situation such as a disease outbreak. Help your family engage in fun and meaningful activities consistent with your family and cultural values.

4. Get the facts but know the authentic source

Stay informed with the latest health and campus information through the health advisory. Keep things in perspective, however, set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching news about the outbreak. Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage. 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.

5. Concern for your wellness

Here are some resources with different approaches to wellness:

Feel better: Use some health-focussed Apps to pass the time positively.

Laugh together: Whether you prefer classic comedies or fresher fare, it will force everyone to forget their worries for a while. If you're feeling frazzled, the best medicine is a cozy night on the couch with family and giant laughs. Also, turn off the news, silence your notifications, and get everyone in the family do the same.

Stay active: Though social distancing is critical and many public spaces are closing as a preventative measure, you can (and should) go on walks if that's a viable option in your area and you are feeling physically able. Use these walks as an opportunity to get fresh air and some space from your family. If you're stuck inside, you'll need to get creative to get everyone moving, play indoor games with family, and watch some exercise videos and exercise together.

Meditate: Align your breath with your yoga poses, or focus on what you're grateful for. Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, and meditate.

Eat a good meal: Try to focus on your food items and set a healthy and balanced food for everyone in the family.

More Resources

For students interested in support please contact: Guidance and Counseling Services, IIT Mandi. To talk to a Counselor, call **Ms Lishma Anand (9816998766)** and **Dr Purnima Bajre (8369952689)**. Students on Campus can also visit the counselors with prior intimation in the counseling office.

You can also get the latest tips and updates through our newly launched Facebook page GCS IIT Mandi. <https://www.facebook.com/GCS-IIT-Mandi-101189408201982>