During this unprecedented and unique public health crisis, it is normal to experience a wide-range of emotions.

The COVID-19 outbreak creates a unique type of crisis that brings a great deal of uncertainty surrounding many aspects of daily life. This can understandably affect a person’s mental health, even among those who haven’t been exposed to the disease.

Reactions to a crisis can appear very different from person to person and can occur at any time, so it’s important to support your mental health and overall well-being.

Pat Walker Health Center’s Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) has provided the following resource to help #uarkstopthespread.

**HELPFUL RESOURCES**

- Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety [https://www.virusanxiety.com/](https://www.virusanxiety.com/)
- Pat Walker Health Center CAPS • 479-575-5276
  Medical Services • 479-575-4451 • pwhc@uark.edu
- Office of the Dean of Students • 479-575-5004
- International Students & Scholars Office
  479-575-5003 • iss@uark.edu
  [international students.uark.edu/](http://international students.uark.edu/)
- U of A Cares
  479-575-5004 • uofacares.uark.edu
- Resources for Faculty/Staff
  Arkansas Employee Assistance Program • 800-542-6021
- Human Resources • hr.uark.edu

**SUPPORTING YOURSELF**

**Stay Informed.** Having accurate, and up-to-date information from credible and reliable sources of information ensures you have can make responsible decisions regarding disease prevention, self and family care, travel guidance and more:

- University of Arkansas: [health.uark.edu/coronavirus/](http://health.uark.edu/coronavirus/)

**Limit media exposure.** Exposure to media can be healthy or unhealthy for some individuals. While being “in the know” helps provide a sense of control over a situation for some; for others, it may reinforce anxiety and fear.

Research shows excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative outcomes, so remember to rely on trusted sources to gather the information.

**TIP:** Turn off the TV and/or alert messaging on your phone if starts to cause you distress.

**CAPS 24/7 EMERGENCY PHONE LINE • 479-575-5276**
SUPPORTING YOURSELF

Recognize & Anticipate stress and distress. Emotional distress is common and normal during times of uncertainty and potentially life-threatening situations. Stress can present itself in different ways including physical, emotional, or cognitive ways.

Some common stress/distress reactions include:

- Excessive worry, feeling overwhelmed, or realizing that it’s hard to stop thinking about different aspects of the virus.
- Having trouble sleeping or staying asleep, and changes in eating patterns including eating too little or too much.
- Hyper-vigilance, which can look like excessive or frequent checking up on the news or constantly checking in on family and friends.
- Difficulty relaxing, including muscle tension, and feeling keyed up or on edge.
- Unhealthy coping such as increased alcohol, tobacco, or drug use in order to distance yourself from stress and distress.
- Irritability, anger, and other emotional reactions, including tearfulness, and sadness.
- Wanting to be alone, or feeling detached or numb.

Try different strategies to reduce distress. The strategies that will work for you will be yours, and what works for you may not work for others. It is important to keep at it and try different things.

For most, reactions to stress will lessen over the first few weeks. However, when symptoms and reactions worsen (significantly impacting your ability to function, becoming harder to manage, or are increasing in severity) there is increased need for concern.

We encourage you to reach out to CAPS at 479-575-5276.

CAPS 24/7 EMERGENCY PHONE LINE • 479-575-5276
COVID-19 & YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

HELPFUL STRATEGIES

Keep things in perspective - take a deep breath and stay focused on what the situation actually is, rather than the worst-case-scenario. It can be helpful to shift your focus to things within your control rather than things outside your control. Stay grounded in the present moment, which can help you maintain an internal sense of stability and balance when outside events feel threatening.

Acknowledge reactions and allow yourself time to reflect on what you are feeling and how you may be reacting to any fears and uncertainties.

Talk to loved ones about worries and concerns and know that your feelings are normal and others may be experiencing them too.

Connect with friends and family in new ways if you’re isolated. Connect with those you feel closest to for support. Maintaining social networks can foster a sense of normality and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. Feel free to share useful information you find on governmental websites with your friends and family. It will help them deal with their own worry too.

Be prepared (e.g., developing a personal/ family plan for the outbreak).

Educate yourself about preventive measures such as hand-washing and cough etiquette, as well as more complex medical recommendations for prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Schedule positive activities. Do things that are enjoyable, even if you don’t feel like it (listening to music, exercising, yoga, meditation, mindfulness practices, breathing exercises, spending time in nature or with your animals, journaling, or reading inspirational texts to help manage emotions). Schedule regular check-in times with friends and family, even if this has to occur online!

Take time to renew your spirit in whatever way speaks to you – some use prayer, meditation or helping others.

Eat a balanced and nutritious diet.

Get enough sleep every night. We know sleep is restorative and reduces anxiety, helps learning, and equips us to be better problem solvers. Even short periods of sleep deprivation can be troublesome.

Engage in exercise as much as possible for overall good health and to help reduce stress.

As much as possible do try to stick to your usual daily routine. If your day to day activities are disrupted by college closings, attempt to create structure in your day by: scheduling a normal bedtime and wake up time; structuring your time with hobbies, homework, reading, etc.; scheduling regular phone/video contact with friends and family.

Avoid stigmatizing or generalizing. Remember to keep in mind the kindness and empathy with which we always strive to treat one another as we address this challenge together. Be aware if your behavior or attitudes change towards others from another country. Avoid stigmatizing someone who is sick, because it may not be COVID-19. Often when there is uncertainty, our thoughts can become less compassionate and more fear based. Remember, we’re in this together!