



# Coping with COVID-19-related Stress as a Student

*With schools around the country closed, students are facing unprecedented change.*

Your classes may now be virtual. You may have returned home, where you're missing friends and finding studying difficult. Or maybe you've stayed put and worry about your family. Perhaps you're juggling your children's educational needs as well as your own. You might have lost funding or your job. Whether you're a graduate student or an undergrad, you're probably feeling anxious, sad and uncertain. These feelings are normal. And there are ways to lessen your stress.

## HOW TO COPE

### PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Basic self-care will keep your immune system strong and your emotional reserves full. Get enough sleep. Exercise regularly. Eat well. Try mindfulness apps.

Find activities that engage different parts of yourself. Do something physical like dancing. Occupy your mind with puzzles. Engage your senses with hot baths or fragrant candles.

Look for tasks you can postpone or simply eliminate from your to-do list.

Recognize that the current circumstances are hard for everyone. Don't judge yourself; just do the best you can.

### FIND WAYS TO FOCUS

You might feel unmotivated now. Recognize that the current circumstances are hard for everyone. Don't judge yourself; just do the best you can.

Establish a routine. Get up, go to bed and do your work at the same time every day. Frequent breaks can help you re-engage in your work.

Try to create a separate work space, although you should reserve your sleeping area for sleeping. If family members are distracting you, use "I statements" to explain the problem—"I'm worried about my exam next week"—and work together to develop solutions.

### SEEK OUT SOCIAL SUPPORT

Your classmates have probably scattered. And having to stay home can be lonely. To combat isolation, come together with your dorm-mates or graduate school cohort via technology.



Even something as simple as turning on your webcam during virtual classes can help you and others feel more connected.

#### **HELP OTHERS COPE**

Your classmates and family members are anxious, too. You don't have to fix their problems. It's enough to let them know they're not alone.

If you're a psychology graduate student on a clinical track, you're probably helping patients manage the same anxieties you're facing yourself. Be sure to address your own concerns separately so you can focus on patients during sessions. Ask your supervisor for help.

#### **FIND WAYS TO MANAGE DISAPPOINTMENT**

Whether it's an internship, dissertation defense or graduation ceremony, important events may not happen this year.

Grieve those losses, then reframe how you think about these life events. Think about how you can honor what you've achieved. Find new ways to celebrate. Consider recreating important events once it's safe.

#### **LIMIT YOUR MEDIA CONSUMPTION**

Of course, it's good to stay informed, especially about what's happening in your area.

But too much news—especially social media—can add to your anxiety. To avoid being overwhelmed, set limits on your media consumption and smartphone use. Cut through misinformation by relying on reputable sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization.

#### **FOCUS ON THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL**

Your classmates, friends or family members may be disobeying the rules about physical distancing or doing other things that add to your stress.

While modeling good behavior and staying safe yourself, recognize that you can't control what other people do. You can only control your own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Another thing you can't control? The uncertainty about what comes next. Instead of worrying about our ambiguous future, focus on solving immediate problems.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

APA Webinar for Students on Coping in the Era of Coronavirus

[on.apa.org/coping-webinar-students](https://on.apa.org/coping-webinar-students)

COVID-19 Education FAQs

[on.apa.org/ed-covid-faq](https://on.apa.org/ed-covid-faq)