

SUBJECT: Tips for coping with stress and anxiety  
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Saluki Students,

Stressed? Feeling anxious? You're not alone. Given upcoming finals, COVID-19 and other events that may be happening in your life, it's normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed. Fear of the unknown and lack of control over our environment have long been shown to increase anxiety and affect our mental health.

While you can't control everything around you, you can maintain your resilience by taking control of how you respond. To help prepare for finals, you can review the Writing Center's [Tips for Studying for Exams](#). To help you cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) offers the following tips. (Visit [siu.edu/coronavirus](http://siu.edu/coronavirus) for information about the university's pandemic response.)

- **Stick to the facts.** The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [World Health Organization](#) and [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) are likely to be more accurate sources of information than what friends post on social media.
- **Be informed but not consumed.** Don't spend all day scrolling through social media, watching the news, arguing with people or trying to persuade them. Over-concentration on stressful situations can contribute to depression, feelings of helplessness and anxiety.
- **Accept reality and acknowledge the unknown.** COVID-19 and the effects of the pandemic will be around for a while. By accepting reality and acknowledging the unknowns associated with the pandemic, we can better equip ourselves to make the best of a tough situation. Focus on positive events and making lemonade out of lemons.
- **Stay in the moment.** Focus on what you can control and let go of the past, future, and things beyond your control. Break days up into small, manageable parts and take one day at a time.
- **Keep things in perspective.** Not everyone who coughs has COVID-19, and a shift to remote learning does not mean you will never have a "typical" college experience. Catch yourself if you find your thoughts spiraling in a negative direction.
- **Don't judge yourself or others.** Your emotions are valid and real, even if your feelings keep changing. Everyone has a different experience. Someone who has lost a loved one to COVID-19 may have a different opinion than someone who is struggling financially after being laid off.
- **Don't equate physical distance with social distance.** Social support is a huge predictor of mental health, so it is essential to find safe ways to connect with other people. Set aside time each day to have positive connections with others, even if you can't be near them physically.
- **Build structure and a daily routine.** Humans are shown to struggle where there is a lot of unstructured free time. Create new routines, build a schedule, keep busy with things you enjoy and make time for things you've never had the time to do.

- **Take care of yourself.** It is important to get balanced sleep, eat healthy foods, exercise, avoid mood-altering substances, attend to your physical health and decrease risk by washing your hands, wearing a mask and taking other steps to remain safe.
- **Know the resources available to you** and loved ones both on and off campus. Also help loved ones seek resources if you recognize they are struggling or presenting with mental health symptoms. Here are a few resources:
  - SIU Counseling and Psychological Services, 618-453-5371 (for students)
  - Suicide hotline, 800-273-8255
  - Domestic violence hotline, 800-799-7233
  - Alcohol and other drugs hotline, 877-726-4727

Whether your feelings relate to COVID-19, finals, both or anything else, always remember that it's OK to reach out if you need help. [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) staff are available to help you, no matter where you live. Call 618-453-5371 for information or an appointment.

Please stay safe and have a happy Thanksgiving.

Lori Stettler  
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs