

# UTSA Counseling and Mental Health Services

## Getting through Self-Isolation One Breath at a Time

During and following self-isolation because of concerns related to Coronavirus, you may begin to experience some common stress responses. It is important to use self-care strategies, coping techniques and reach out for additional support when necessary. We are here to support you during self-isolation and beyond. This document includes strategies for coping and self-care as well as instructions for accessing our services during your time off campus.

It is well-established that when we are stressed, the immune system's ability to fight off antigens is reduced. The stress hormone can suppress the effectiveness of the immune system.

We might also experience an epidemic fear or "Coronavirus Panic." Emergencies or critical incidents naturally brings upon a tremendous amount of stress, anxiety and fear for those directly and indirectly affected.

Our body is stressed on a minute by minute basis with constant and overwhelming social media reports of emergencies and current events. It is essential to keep your stress levels at a minimum because there is only so much you can do.

### Common Stress Responses

- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future and death
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about the epidemic
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and feeling powerless
- Changes in eating patterns; loss of appetite or overeating
- Crying for "no apparent reason"
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Difficulty sleeping or falling asleep

### How to Cope

- Take good care of yourself physically and emotionally Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of water, eat healthy and balanced meals.
- If you smoke or drink coffee, try to limit your intake as nicotine and caffeine can also add to your stress.
- Cultivate self-compassion and be kind to yourself for the challenges that you are going through.
- Limit exposure to news or social media on the Coronavirus.
- Set a time limit (e.g., an hour per day) on watching or reading only trustworthy and reliable news or talking about Coronavirus. Watching or reading news about the event repeatedly will only increase your stress.
- Talk about it (in moderation)
- By talking with others about the event, you can relieve stress and realize that others share your feelings.
- While you are self-isolating, remember that you are not alone. We can get through this together as a UTSA community.

## Self-Care Strategies

While you might be currently isolated, it is important to maintain connections to interests, friends and entertainment. Try these tasks for some self-care strategies.

- Avoid drugs and excessive drinking or emotional eating. Drugs, alcohol and emotional eating may temporarily seem to remove stress, but in the long run they generally create additional problems that compound the stress you were already feeling.
- Structure your day and find some indoor activities you enjoy. Balance mind/body, fun and learning activities to keep your brain and body stimulated.
- Read a book
- Establish a daily meditation routine (with a minimum 15 minutes per day)
- Yoga
- Watch a movie
- Listen to or play music Drawing
- Do a 30-minute At-Home online video fitness class
- Play a video game

## Services Availability

Recalled study abroad students have several options for mental health services

- The UTSA crisis helpline is available 24/7, call 210-458-4140, option 3
- UTSA provides membership to the TAO app with self-care modules, exercises and information. TAO provides online self-help for depression, anxiety and other common concerns. Download the app or visit the [TAO website](#) to get started.
- **A video conference session with a [UTSA Counseling and Mental Health Services](#) staff member is available and easy to schedule. Call 210-458-4140, option 2, or email [counseling.services@utsa.edu](mailto:counseling.services@utsa.edu) to schedule a session.**

## Additional Coping Strategies

- Explore something new - Learn something new that has always been in your bucket list, but you never had the time for it before. Now is the perfect time!
- Structure your day, one thing at a time
- Make a To-Do list by breaking down your day into morning, afternoon and evening activities just like when you are in school.
- Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. "Checking off" tasks will give you a sense of accomplishment, control and mastery. It makes things feel less overwhelming.
- Do something positive and meaningful. Helping other people can give you a sense of purpose in a situation that feels "out of your control."
- Do anything else you find enjoyable. These healthy activities can help you get your mind off the epidemic and keep the stress in check.
- Stay hopeful and optimistic
- Nothing is permanent. Everything will pass including the Coronavirus epidemic.
- Take one moment at a time.

*\*Adapted from Duke Kunshan University Counseling and Psychological Services*