

Coping with Your Emotions during Election Season

It is quite **normal** to become emotionally reactive to what is happening in our society right now. Managing your emotions during election season paired with the impact of COVID-19 is a universal experience but is impacting us all in various ways. We at **UHCL Counseling Services** want to provide you with tips on how to cope and reduce some of the stress you might be experiencing with the following tips:

Reach out to Counseling Services! We would love to support you all during this time. We offer confidential individual, couples, and group therapy- 100% virtual!! We also have ongoing virtual outreach focusing on Mindfulness, Relaxation, and learning skills on how to tolerate/navigate stress. Another added benefit are our mental health care package, corona-virus anxiety workbook, and other amazing resources that can be found on our website at: <https://www.uhcl.edu/counseling-services/>.

Do something productive. Sometimes we focus on what is out of our control but ignore what is within our control. Try to engage in activities that make you feel useful and directly or indirectly benefit you. Examples: Clean up your space, Organize your closet, Research ways you can help during the election, Locate advocacy groups that share your beliefs, Start on that project you have been avoiding for months.

Reach out to your loved ones. We are in this together! Reach out to your loved ones to assure them that they are not alone. We forget that others might be dealing with stress or concerns unbeknown to us. Sometimes checking in on others can provide a sense of support. Reconnect/Connect with intentionality. You never know how reaching out to others can positively impact you and them!

Pay attention to the type of social media you are consuming. Monitor your media use and check your reactions before and after taking in the information. Consider setting time limits on your consumption. You may find that you need to step back from social media or the news if you find those outlets start making your feelings intensify. Identify who you can discuss the results with in a way that's helpful to you rather than reaching out to those who work you up further. Model healthy communication; this is an opportunity to show that you can elevate conversations and engage in positive conversation. Opt out of unproductive conversations or avoid them all together.

Practice anxiety-specific self-care. Set a reminder on your phone to take 25 deep breaths at set times throughout the day. If you begin to worry, review the facts rather than general media coverage. Practice positive self-talk such as, "I am calm. I am safe. I can concentrate on other things." Imagine vivid scenes of your favorite calming, safe spaces. Carry a small item in your pocket you associate with safety and peace that you can touch when you need to. Download free coloring pages from the internet to complete. Do gentle stretching throughout your day.

Utilize self-care apps. Download WellTrak, Calm, Headspace, Sanvello, Insight Timer, or another app to your smartphone to help you practice slowing down, grounding yourself, and creating space to breathe.

Focus on gratitude. Jot down daily reminders of what you are grateful for– such as your health or your family – and place them in a jar or container to help you maintain perspective. Revisit the jar as often as you need. It will remind you of the people and things that provide you with strength and support.

Connect with something larger than yourself. Tapping into religious or spiritual practices, being in nature, playing with children or animals, or enjoying an art form (music, art gallery, theater, etc.) can support your emotional health and help you maintain perspective.

Volunteer. There are plenty of organizations out there that simply need your time, such as polling place and food banks. Find one that aligns with your values. VolunteerMatch.org is a national website. Search for local volunteer opportunities.

Adapted from Counseling and Psychological Services at Texas Woman's University

Any individual requiring an accommodation in order to participate in these services will need to contact Counseling Services at 281.283.2580 prior to participating.