Dear CDU Staff and Faculty,

Your colleagues at Student Health and Wellness (SHAW) have been thinking about you. We wonder how to make sense of all the challenges in our world today. Racial injustice and political tensions continue to impact our sense of safety and unity. The pandemic is causing significant disruptions to our bodies, our relationships, our finances, and our schedules. Many of us are feeling highly anxious about our lives, our families and our community. In an effort to provide support, we would like to share some best practices to help you stay balanced and maintain a sense of calm during this time. How do we manage the tsunami of emotions that pours into our lives every day?

First, it is PERFECTLY NORMAL to be experiencing a wide variety of feelings. Imagine a piano keyboard representing our range of human emotions. There are 88 keys, each a different note or emotion. That’s a lot of emotions! Most of us, however, learn to play only a few keys. It’s like we have a favorite song that we play over and over again. We’re very comfortable with this tune because it’s familiar, and this soon becomes our daily emotional range. Until … life causes us to move. Our fingers sweep right and left on the keyboard, playing notes we’ve never heard before. It doesn’t sound right and it certainly doesn’t feel comfortable. The news updates are alarming. Our emails are flooded with announcements. Events are cancelled. Businesses and schools are closed. Life can start to feel surreal. Everything is changing and our security in the old song is gone. We want to come back to center and play our familiar tune. THIS IS A COMPLETELY NORMAL REACTION TO STRESSFUL TIMES. Things will continue to shift and change. As we explore new chords on our keyboard, we need to remember now, more than ever, to prioritize strategies to take impeccable care of ourselves and our loved ones.

Here are some suggestions:

Create boundaries around your consumption of media, social media, email, and text messages. During moments when new information, guidance, and instructions are coming at us from multiple angles (e.g., news, Twitter, campus communications, calls, and texts from friends and family), we can easily find ourselves feeling the urge to stay on top of all information at all hours of the day and night. We can get sucked into continuous reading, tweeting and texting, which causes us to feel even more anxious and overwhelmed. Let’s stay informed, aware, connected to others, AND healthy. Limit your
exposure to small blocks of time, be intentional and thoughtful about the information sources you follow, and stay mindful of spreading information that is biased, inaccurate or unsubstantiated.

**Stay active.** This is a great time to explore online resources for physical activity. A large variety of apps and online streaming content are accessible at little to no cost. Don’t forget about nature. Get outside! It’s easy to physically distance outside! Stretch your body, practice sleep hygiene, be mindful of what food and drink you consume, make a COVID playlist, and dance and jam to some favorite tunes.

**Maintain connections with others.** The guidance from public health experts is that physical distancing, proper hand-washing, and face coverings serve to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Even if you believe your immune system is strong, remember these guidelines are in place to protect the broader community. However, at the same time, social connections and social contacts are essential to our survival. We must schedule a time to connect with others virtually. If you’re experiencing ‘zoom burnout’, try a phone call instead! Check-in with others and ask how they are doing. A simple text, funny meme share, or phone call can help stave off feelings of loneliness and maintain bonds.

**Exercise patience, kindness, and compassion toward yourself and others.** Collective confusion, frustration, and stress is the name of the game lately. Remember your strengths and coping resources that have helped you get through other challenging situations. Those internal resources are available for you to tap into and to share with others. If you feel particularly anxious, ask yourself, “How did I get through the last stressful situation I faced? What strategies did I use? What behaviors were helpful?” Make a list, journal, meditate, breathe deeply. Please be patient and kind in your interactions with others. We all are learning as we go. Be gracious and generous in sharing your time, resources, and expertise.

**Create structure.** With all the distractions, it can be challenging to maintain our typical habits (e.g., meal schedule, going to bed on time). Try to maintain some routine in your day-to-day life. Developing small and realistic goals. The following questions may provide a useful starting point:

- What would I like to accomplish today, tomorrow, or over the next week? Begin by listing the responsibilities on your plate at the moment. Start small and be super basic!
- What is realistic for me to accomplish given _____ [insert unique aspects of your personal and professional situation]?
- Which expectations for myself and my work do I need to adjust during this time?
- What structure and supports do I need to help me accomplish my revised personal and work goals?
Know when to ask for help. If you find you are having difficulty coping, please consider reaching out for help. Here are some suggestions:

- Immediate crisis counseling regarding distress associated with COVID-19 [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Disaster Distress Hotline](https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster). (Services in multiple languages and for those who are hearing impaired) You can also text for services in English and Spanish.

- 24-hour [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.nationalsuicidehotline.org). Calls are free and confidential. (800) 273-8255

- CDU’s Employee Assistance Program, MHN [http://members.mhn.com](http://members.mhn.com) company code: charlesdrew (800) 227-1060

  *Immediate Crisis Support  
  Confidential, free, available 24/7/365  
  (800) 322-9707  
  TTY users call 711

- CDU Student Health and Wellness (SHAW)  
  Confidential consultations, support and referrals  
  Dr. Robert Marzio (323) 563-4925  
  Kimberly Womack (323) 357-3426

Again, we want you to know that we are thinking about you. We are all exploring some new keys on our personal pianos.

Together with you,  
Dr. Robert Marzio  
Kimberly Womack  
Student Health and Wellness