



GRADUATE SCHOOL AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Research suggests that graduate students are at significantly greater risk of mental health concerns than the general population (Evans et al., 2018). This is unsurprising given the often highly competitive nature of graduate programs, feelings of imposter syndrome (Cowie et al. 2018), financial stress, social isolation, and concerns about obtaining a job after completing your degree. This alone would be a challenge for anyone without the additional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, more than ever, the suggestions below may support you during this time of uncertainty and transition.

ESTABLISH A NEW ROUTINE

Having a structure or schedule can help you regain a sense of control and give you an objective for your day. It is helpful to include some staples of general wellness in this routine such as regular exercise, eating nutritious meals, a daily self-care activity, and maintaining sufficient sleep.

MAINTAIN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

You may be separated from your social support system. It is important to still maintain connections while maintaining social-distancing practices. Talk, text, and schedule virtual hangouts. There are a number of online forums to connect and/or relate to other graduate students that can offer a sense of community.

SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WITH WORK

Communicate with your program and/or research advisor to clarify expectations for your work at this time. Avoid setting unrealistic expectations on your productivity and maintain personal boundaries regarding your workload and availability to your program/advisor while working from home.

References:

Evans, T., Bira, L. Gastelum, J., Weise, L., & Vanderford, N. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology*, 36, 282-284.

Cowie, M., Nealis, L., Sherry, S., Hewitt, P., & Flett G. (2018). Perfectionism and academic difficulties in graduate students: Testing incremental prediction and gender moderation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 123 (1), 223-228.

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM PROBLEMATIC SYSTEMS

Many graduate programs have systemic issues that promote unhealthy competition among peers and work to magnify your insecurities. Work to avoid internalizing blame and remember that there are likely some external factors contributing to your experiences

RESOURCES:

Cook Counseling Center
240 McComas Hall
54-231-6557
<https://ucc.vt.edu/>

Hokie Wellness
895 Washington St SW,
540-231-2233
<https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/>