



## From the Director:

To our students, faculty, and staff:

We at the Counseling Center hope this message finds you healthy and safe. Though we are not physically present in our offices at this time, we want you to know that we remain dedicated to supporting students' mental health and well-being, more now than ever. We have worked hard to create remote access to our services and remain available to both new and existing clients. We are using video and phone formats for initial consultations and individual counseling sessions and are working to bring some of our groups and workshops to online formats as well.

In addition to this modification of our existing services, we are reaching out to the university community during these challenging times through other new and accessible ways. One of these efforts is represented by this newsletter, within which we eagerly share information, support and resources, in addition to updates found on our website. We are hopeful that the materials shared here will help generate ideas for sustaining well-being and also facilitate feelings of connectedness on and off campus.

Though the future remains uncertain, we continue to offer you the support of the Counseling Center, if even from afar.

Sincerely,  
Joseph Hermes, Ph.D.

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## Changes to Counseling Center Operations

Due to utmost concerns for health and safety during this time of COVID-19, the Counseling Center is no longer open for face-to-face appointments and is now functioning entirely remotely. You may still call the Counseling Center phone number at 312-996-3490 during current business hours (9am-5pm) to schedule an appointment or to contact a counselor. If calling after hours, press 2 to be connected to a crisis counselor.

### For Students

- Initial consultations are being conducted by video, rather than in-person. All students should have access to Webex using their UIC login credentials. Call the Counseling Center at 312-996-3490 to schedule an initial consultation.
- Counselors are providing individual therapy services by video and phone, with video being preferred.
- Some group therapies and workshops are being migrated to online formats. Current group therapy clients are being contacted by group co-facilitators regarding support in the absence of face-to-face contact.
- If you are currently receiving psychiatric services at the Counseling Center, please email your psychiatrist to arrange for a time to speak with her about plans for your continued treatment during this time.
- If you suspect you have come into contact with someone with the coronavirus, or are having symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing, we ask that you see a medical evaluation. If you need to speak with a counselor urgently or need other resources, let us know during your call.

### For Faculty and Staff

We appreciate your support of UIC students and are available to consult regarding how best to support students.

## **Coping with Stress Related to COVID-19**

Social media and other online resources have no shortage of ideas for how to handle stress in the era of COVID-19. While this is positive in many ways, we are aware that integrating these suggestions can be overwhelming. The Counseling Center staff has compiled the following list of both general ideas for coping, as well as situation-specific suggestions.

### **Eat well and move often!**

Physical and mental health are closely intertwined, and taking care of your body with proper eating, sleeping, and exercising offers an invaluable foundation for good mental health. Try some at-home workouts (even if it's just getting off the couch and doing a lap around your place), and don't forget to eat fruits and veggies, even if they're frozen or canned! Consider a consistent "bedtime," which leads nicely into...

### **Create a Balanced Routine**

You may not have a routine figured out just yet, and that's okay. Consider waking up around the same time every day, and include a combination of restful and productive activities. Remember that you may not be as productive as you would like each day! Be gentle with yourself and try to engage in something good for your mental, physical, relational, and spiritual health on as many days as you can. It may help to differentiate the days by earmarking certain activities for certain days of the week. It may take a few tries to get the balance just right – just pay attention to how you feel and assess at the end of the day what was and was not helpful.

### **Limit News Intake**

While staying informed can soothe anxiety to a certain extent, reading too much news tends to cause unnecessary stress. Sometimes, less is more! Try to get a sense of your threshold for news before it starts to get overwhelming. In addition to limiting the quantity of news you consume, consider the quality. Pick 1-2 news sources to check (perhaps a trusted local news network and the CDC/WHO), at a rate that makes sense for you.

### **Consider what you can control**

We engage in solution-focused coping when we have control in a situation. Ventra card running low? The solution-focused way to cope with this is to refill your card. It makes sense that you may be feeling like you don't have control over the current circumstances of your life. In these situations, attempts to cope in a solution-focused way tend to be frustrating, and emotion-focused coping is the way to go. To engage in emotion-focused coping, think about what you need to make the situation more comfortable and survivable – this list is a good place to start! Other ideas are deep, diaphragmatic breathing and mindfulness meditations, which can help us accept what we cannot change. You can explore more ideas by considering how you have coped with uncertainty in the past.

### **Connect with Others**

Though the internet jokes that the stay-at-home order is an introvert's paradise, most people eventually feel the impact of limited social contact. Try talking with a friend or family member regularly and at a rate that helps you feel uniquely connected (once a day, once a week, etc.) Even if you are feeling secure, consider reaching out to those who may be especially lonely or impacted at this time.

### **Try to see this as an opportunity**

How many times have you thought, "If only life would stand still, I would finally have time for \_\_\_!" Though many people are limited in where they can physically be and how much they can afford, this is a great time to work on yourself and your relationships. It could be taking on anything from a new hobby, to self-improvement, to something you've been meaning to do for ages. How can you make the most of this strange circumstance?

### **Be gracious with yourself**

This is an adjustment for everyone in varying degrees – do not expect yourself to be able to easily figure all of this out. Try to be aware of how you are feeling, and be compassionate toward yourself when you are struggling. You are not alone! ❖

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Though many people are impacted similarly by the coronavirus pandemic, we are aware that so many individuals and groups are also coping with unique burdens that are economic, academic, social, physical, and emotional. These might include:

- Those who have unexpectedly lost work/income
- Those who cannot stay home due to the essential natures of their jobs
- Those who are balancing working from home without childcare
- Those who are struggling with using online learning formats
- Those whose access to technology is limited
- Those who have had exciting or necessary plans delayed
- Those who are encountering racism and prejudice
- Those who are studying/traveling internationally
- Those who are more physically vulnerable to the virus or are close to someone who is
- Those who are alone or separated from loved ones
- Those whose homes are not safe havens
- Those with worsening mental health conditions

Please know that we see you! Check out the resources below for support, or call the Counseling Center to talk about your options.

### Financial:

[Illinois Unemployment Information](#)

[Greater Chicago Food Depository/UIC Pop-Up Pantry](#)

[U&I Care Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#)

[Resources for Essential Needs](#)

FYI: Evictions are illegal between 3/13-4/13. Talk to your landlord/lender/utility companies if you are struggling to pay your bills.

### Academic:

[Resources for UIC Students and Teachers related to Online Course](#)

[Migration](#)

[Tips and Available Technology for UIC Students during Online Learning](#)

(including access to low-cost wifi!)

[UIC Libraries](#) (functioning remotely; potential resource for [laptops](#) )

[UIC Academic Center for Excellence](#) (providing services remotely)

[UIC Disability Resource Center](#) (providing services remotely)

**[Additional UIC Resources here!](#)**

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

### FEELIN' GOOD FRIDAYS WORKSHOP SERIES

FRIDAYS FROM 11:00AM-NOON, STARTING APRIL 3RD  
Join us online for weekly workshops on the following topics taming your inner critical voice, healthy mind/healthy body, test anxiety, and self-compassion and gratitude.

Registration is required through emailing Johanna Strokoff ([jstrokof@uic.edu](mailto:jstrokof@uic.edu)) and Yun ([YunLu@uic.edu](mailto:YunLu@uic.edu)). Students are welcome to register for one to all workshops. [Click here](#) for more information!

### SELF-COMPASSION WORKSHOP SERIES

TUESDAYS FROM 1-2:30PM, STARTING APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>

FRIDAYS FROM 1-2:30PM, STARTING APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup>

We are offering our Self-Compassion workshop remotely! [Click here](#) for more information and to register. *Can't make the workshop?* [Try these Self-Compassion meditations!](#)

### MANAGING YOUR MOOD DURING A PANDEMIC WORKSHOP SERIES

TUESDAYS FROM 4-5:30PM, STARTING APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>

Join us online for a 3-week structured Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills workshop! [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

### Social:

[UIC Peer Support Network](#) (groups planning to run in an online format – new members welcome!)

UIC Cultural Centers – many operating remotely

### Physical:

[UIC Family Medicine Clinic](#) \*please call in advance if you are experiencing symptoms potentially related to the coronavirus\*

[CDC/CDC Resources in Other Languages](#)

### Emotional:

[UIC Counseling Center](#); for crisis resources, [click here!](#)

[UIC Wellness Center](#)

[24-Hour National Suicide Hotline](#)

### Domestic Violence/Abuse:

[UIC Campus Advocacy Network](#) (providing services remotely)

[YWCA](#)

[National Domestic Abuse Hotline](#)

[Emergency Sexual Assault Services](#)