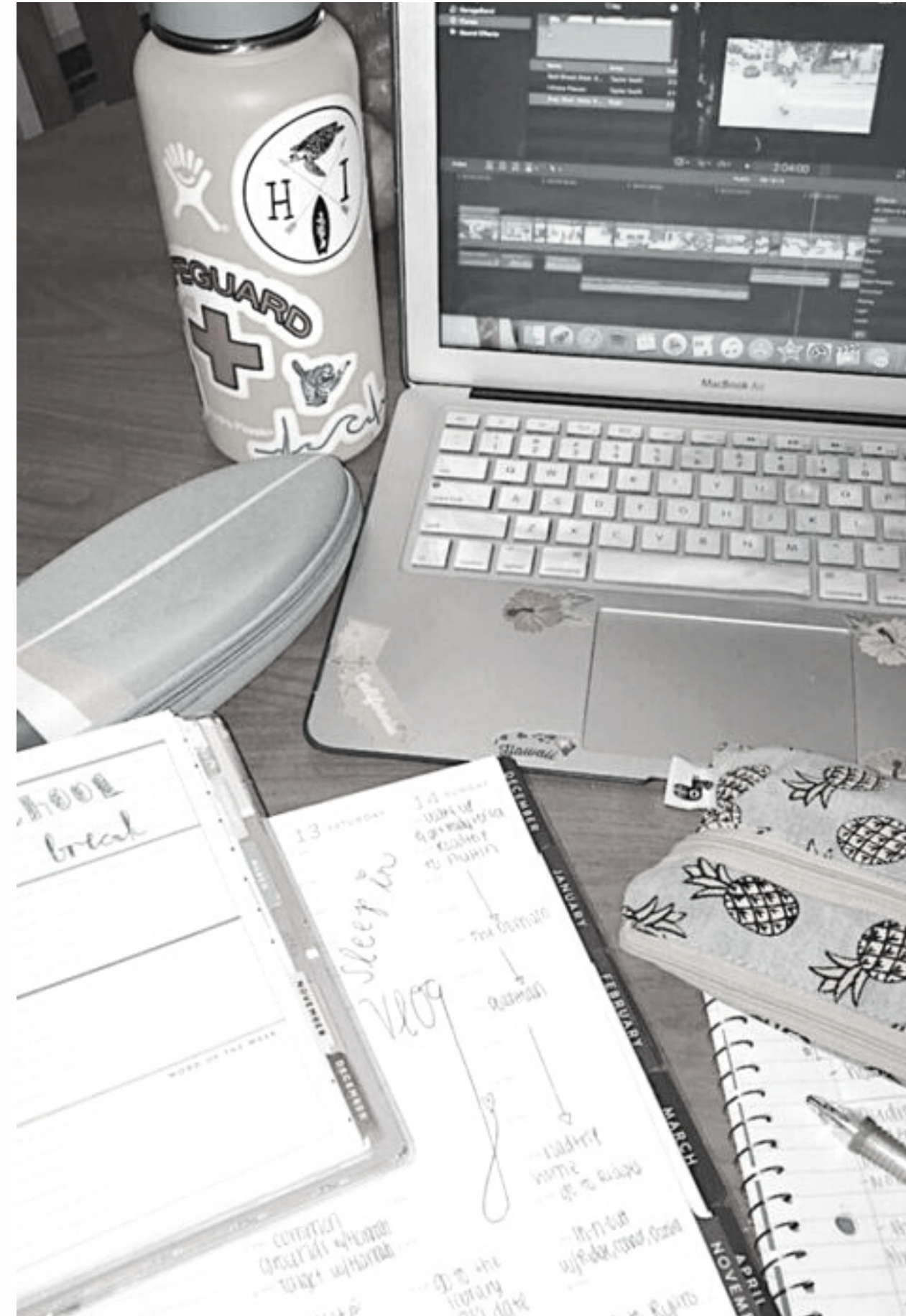


DISTANCE LEARNING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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TRANSITION

The world increased the acceleration of distance learning opportunities. While some of the education institutions just started to prepare for this system, others were prepared already. While some of the students were familiar with the concept of distance learning, for some, it was a transition to a totally new system. While some students and teachers were able to use the technology easily, for some it turned into a problem that had to be solved quickly. Nevertheless, this quick and sudden transition was not an arbitrary choice. The decision to switch to distance learning came out of necessity. Suddenly, all students and teachers had to adjust to the distance learning system. Let's not forget the hard work and dedication of the teams who made this platform ready to use.

A REAL CAUSE

The main point to keep in mind about this transition is the cause of this rapid transition. It is a vital concern that causes extreme worry, fear, and disorganization in all humans. Many people worry about themselves, and the wellness of their older and sick family members, or their children. They experience financial worries accompanied with worries about when it will be over and the uncertainty of its outcomes. Too many thoughts, questions, worries are crowding people's minds. It is very important to show respect to each other's way of coping with this pandemic as our minds are overcrowded with such a major, shared global concern.



PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

All these experiences have psychological reflections on people. Social media, WhatsApp groups, television channels are overflowing with Covid-19 news. And staying at home to keep social distance creates other emotional hardship. You may be feeling anxious, afraid, stuck, lonely, angry, bored, or lazy. And sometimes you may feel more motivated, active, productive, pleased, and happy. These feelings and emotions we have are like clouds; they come and go in various times with different densities. Rest assured, everyone is trying to cope with these feelings in some way.

COPING MECHANISMS

Some stay away from social media or use it excessively; some find comfort in humor. Some act like there is nothing wrong and go into denial, maybe sleep more. Some engage their mind in films and series without sleeping. They don't realize how time passes, or sometimes it doesn't pass. Sometimes, days get mixed up; sometimes, they feel stuck, bored, or lonely. And some are extremely busy, even forget to eat as if they respond to the crisis. Physical ailment, headaches, and stomachaches occur. Briefly, everyone goes through this period differently even there are similarities.

WHAT TO DO

Circumstances are difficult; however it is our choice how to live this period.

- Get information from trusted and official sources.
- Do your research and learn.
- Know what measures to take and apply them.

This way, some bits of this unknown period will become known and controllable, and make you feel comfortable.

CALM YOUR ANXIETY

If your mind is overwhelmed with anxious thoughts, try to calm your mind. If you constantly think like ‘what if I get sick’, remind yourself that you have taken all the necessary measures. If you find yourself focusing on how your graduation or summer plans are ruined, try to think of new plans to make up for them instead. If you ask yourself repeatedly about when this will end, remember that it shall pass. No, we cannot bring back the past, however, we can reshape the present and the future. We can dream about things that will make us feel well and hopeful about the future.

IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

When you feel some emotions or thoughts, acknowledge them and ask yourself. What could this emotion/thought/bodily feeling be telling me here and now?

Maybe you are feeling lonely. It might be telling you that you need to get close to some people. You can call a loved one and chat. Maybe you feel lost and stuck in your things-to-do list. This feeling tells you that you need a break and distance. If you feel extreme anger, you may need to be understood. Try to create an environment and terms to better express yourself.

Knowing what you need and satisfying this need would calm your feelings.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

Our purpose here is not to dismiss emotions, thoughts and/or bodily feelings we experience. It is normal to feel many of those feelings and you are not alone. Therefore, start with acknowledging these emotions and thoughts first. Just sit back and watch them, like you are watching the passing of clouds, with wonder and without judging or criticizing. All emotions and thoughts are like clouds; they come and go.



REGULAR PHYSICAL EXERCISES,
BREATHING EXERCISES AND
MEDITATING MAKE IT EASY TO COPE
AND FOCUS.

TIME TO STUDY

Students and academics have to continue distance learning in a rapidly changing environment with mixed feelings. This is in fact a life saver, psychologically. Even though somethings change, seeing their teacher on the screen makes students feel better and seeing their students on the screen makes teachers feel better. Teacher and students, who are in connection all the time, are healthy, alive and reachable. They make an effort to be attentive to each other and interact with each other during the class.

Regardless of how it is delivered, students need to get ready for the class, prepare homework, and study for exams. Same goes for teachers as well. These are familiar because they are part of the daily routine. It makes us feel good to maintain the old routines (even in a different way).

TIPS TO MAKE THE TRANSITION TO DISTANCE LEARNING EASIER

Create a study space.

Prepare ahead of time and be on time.

Keep in touch and keep in contact.

Make it pleasant.

Plan ahead, keep a daily planner.

Remember that you are doing this for yourself.

Be respectful and obey ethical rules.

Give and take support.

CREATE A STUDY SPACE

First, make sure you are technologically ready. Study at an area where there is strong internet connection. A clean and quiet environment helps you concentrate better. Keep your door closed during the class. If necessary, put a “do not disturb” sign on your door. If this is a shared area in your house, explain family members that they need to give you space and privacy during the class. Ask them kindly not to bother you during class (for example, asking you questions while you are attending online class). Use earphones in a shared area not to disturb others or be disturbed by others.

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME AND BE ON TIME

Just as if you are entering a classroom on time, enter an online class on time. Prepare your study area 15 minutes before the class begins. Get rid of anything that distracts you. Whether it be a cluttered desk or windows open on your browser. Remove or turn these off during class. Keep your course materials handy. This preparation will get your mind ready for class.

KEEP IN TOUCH AND KEEP IN CONTACT

Take notes to hold your attention. Interact with your classmates or your teacher via the system features. Ask questions. While some students are more outgoing and social, some may act shy or unwilling. Take notice of yourself and keep in touch with your classmates and your teacher for your own good. You may not be able to communicate spontaneously and quickly since you are not together with your friends physically. You can create a group and help each other remotely to make up for this.

MAKE IT PLEASANT

You can prepare an herbal tea before your class begins. Keep some snacks on your desk to munch on. It may be difficult to bring all your colored pencils to school, but at home you can use them freely. Such things are meant to make this period more pleasant and comfortable. If you or someone else is getting distracted by these, don't do them.

PLAN AHEAD, KEEP A DAILY PLANNER

Don't leave things to the last minute. Don't try to do multiple classes or assignments at the same time. Make a things-to-do list daily.

Create routines. Set realistic goals. If trying to finish more than one assignment in the same day that is not realistic, prioritize them.

Everyone has a different learning and studying style. Remember to take breaks. Taking an action and starting something requires self-discipline and motivation. Try to gain these skills during this period.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DOING THIS FOR YOURSELF

Remember that you are taking this course for yourself. You are responsible for all that you do and don't do.

- Take action.
- Be productive.
- Follow up the online announcements.
- Come up with solutions for your problems.
- Set reminders.
- Eat healthy, sleep well.

BE RESPECTFUL AND OBEY ETHICAL RULES

Being respectful and ethical determines the whole atmosphere of the class and makes learning easier. Everyone attending the class needs to show respect to one another and self and set an example to each other. Be sure to express yourself good during this period in which written expression will be more common. Pay special attention to the punctuation. Reread what you wrote and think about how it may sound to others in written language. When you express yourself better, you will receive more support from those around you. It might be wrong and unethical to capture image. Ask for permission before you do it. What are the ethical rules? Inquire into the subject.

GIVE AND TAKE SUPPORT

Work with friends who need support and help. Be there for them. Tell them that you are available when they need help or support. Be sure to ask help or support from your friends or teachers when you have difficulty with something.

If you are experiencing psychological issues, consult an expert or the Psychological Development and Counseling Center of the university. If you are struggling due to your disability, do not hesitate to consult the Disability Support Unit.

For further information,
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