Living through a pandemic
Understanding, coping, and finding meaning

COVID-19 Webinar Series
April 29, 2020 | 7:00-8:15 pm EDT

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We feel the world has changed, and it has. We know this is temporary, but it doesn't feel that way, and we realize things will be different.
Poll #1

Name 1 or 2 of your biggest stressors (in just a few words) during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., "loneliness", "unemployment")
Stressors
“I think people are acting out their frustrations and their racism and their stereotypes and prejudices, [and] that the floodgates are lifted when situations like this arise.”

Dr. Paul Watanabe
Professor of Political Science
Director, Institute for Asian American Studies
University of Massachusetts-Boston

Long history of anti-Asian discrimination

- “Uncivilized, unclean, filthy beyond all conception.” (New York Daily Tribune, 1854)
- Bubonic plague
- “Yellow Peril”
- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- Immigration Act of 1924
From one stereotype to the next

- 1950s: “Model minority”
- “A demographic group whose members are perceived to achieve a higher degree of socioeconomic success than the population average.”
Being a model minority is not enough

Racism as trauma

- Trauma: The experience of severe psychological distress following any terrible or life-threatening event.
- Posttraumatic stress response: increased anxiety/fear, hypervigilance, avoidance, alterations in mood and cognition
- Discrimination predicts lower levels of well-being and increased mental health problems in Asian Americans


Poll #2

Name 1 or 2 of your current coping strategies (in just a few words) during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., "cooking"; "talking to friends")

Coping 101 – Feelings

- Feelings exist. It helps to put them in words...

  “Anxiety, anger, fear, grief, guilt, indifference, numbness”

- When we take away judgment, we can be more free to understand and manage feelings

- Feelings don’t go away just by dismissing them – they will find a way out, sometimes through our bodies
Coping 101 – Thoughts

“I keep thinking I will get COVID19 and die

- Other possibilities?
- What’s the likelihood?
- Evidence for / against?
- How does believing this serve you?
- What would you tell someone else thinking this?

What if you can’t tap into logical mind?

- Deep breathing, slow and deliberate
- Grounding exercises: identify 5 sounds, sights, textures in your surrounding
- Guided progressive relaxation exercises
- Splash water on your face, showers
- Jumping jacks / take a walk
- Call a trusted friend
Coping 101: Behaviors

- Study the facts, don’t go over board
- Take good preventative measures
- Take care of the body: sleep, eat, exercise
- Take care of the mind: do things you like, stay connected, give yourself permission to feel
- Develop a day structure
- Help others if you can
- Don’t be a perfectionist
- Seek professional help when need
When to seek help?

- Presence of these symptoms ALWAYS warrant professional consultation:
  - Suicidal thoughts
  - Hallucination (auditory, visual, tactile)
  - Paranoid thoughts
  - Recurrent panic attacks
  - Chemical dependencies

- Otherwise, consider how symptoms have affected these areas. If any area is significantly affected for > 2 wks, then consult a professional
  - Your body (insomnia, appetite changes, persistent headaches, fatigue, etc.)
  - Your school / work performance
  - Your relationships

- If you repeatedly think about seeking help, then seek help.
It’s OK to celebrate…

When faced with the threat of death, we are reminded to live…  (Ester Perel)

Taking Control & Letting Go

Let us cultivate the serenity to accept things that we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

- Adapted from the serenity prayer
AFFINITY GROUPS
Coping with racial trauma

- Talk about it: Acknowledge; validate; try to understand
- Engage people/activities that replenish you
- Trauma (including racial) = perceived loss of control
- Recognize when to seek professional help
- Get educated about bystander interventions and anti-racism efforts
- Join in solidarity with other oppressed groups in times when you are not the one being attacked
Resources for Asian and AAPI Students Experiencing COVID-19 Related Harassment

March 31, 2020

Below is a compilation of legal, social, and mental health resources for Asian and AAPI students who have experienced, or worry that they may experience, COVID-19 related harassment and discrimination. This list is not comprehensive, if you are aware of further resources not included here, please contact ciao_admin@fas.harvard.edu with suggestions for updates.

Please note that Harvard University is not affiliated with, nor does it explicitly endorse, any of the advocacy groups,Hotlines, or organizations listed here. This list is intended only to inform students of resources available to them in the broader community.

Contents:
1. How should I respond if I am harassed on the street?
2. What constitutes a "bias crime"?
3. What immediate steps should I take if I am the victim of, or witness to, a bias incident?
4. What about a "bias incident"?
5. What if I need legal advice or assistance regarding COVID-19 related discrimination?
6. How can I access mental health resources that will address my specific needs?
7. What if I want to report my experience to an advocacy/protective service organization, or share it through social media?
8. Other resources

COVID-19 General Resources

Please see below for a series of resources that we think will provide a good overview of the pandemic and its mental health impact. This page will constantly evolve as we find more resources, so stay tuned! If you have any links or documents you would like to contribute, please email: info@mentalstudentwellness.com

Overview:
- General health information about COVID-19
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control: Researchers submit Questions and Answers about COVID-19
- American Psychological Association: FAQs about COVID-19 and mental health
- Johns Hopkins University: Interactive map of COVID-19 cases. Visually displays confirmed cases of COVID-19 by geography, as well as economics and deaths.

Racial Bias:
- Justice Works Project: Resources to Address Racial Bias and Disparities: This is an ongoing initiative to help local communities address racial bias and disparities. The project was created by Jagdeep Singh Cheema (2018), a graduate student in History and Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, to develop and disseminate resources that address the web, including institutions, announcements and news articles.

Q&A

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Poll #3

☐ Respond at PollEv.com/jokim
☐ Text JOKIM to 22333 once to join, then text your message

Name 1 coping strategy you will take away and try to use after this talk.

For more information or to register for a webinar, visit:
https://www.mghstudentwellness.org/webinars