ELECTION STRESS GUIDE

TIPS AND RESOURCES TO COPE WITH THE ELECTION

Brought to you by CofC Mental Health Education
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Special thanks to Penn State for their inspiration

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON
COUNSELING CENTER
UNPLUG & BOUNDARIES

UNPLUG BY:

- Cutting back Use:
  - Monitor how you feel after seeing the news.
  - Feeling preoccupied or upset is a sign to take a break.
- Plan digital breaks
  - go for a walk, call a friend, play with pets

SETTING BOUNDARIES:
Block Time for Catching up on Election News:
- Set up morning and evening times to catch up instead of multiple times of day
- Determine how many minutes/hours to allow yourself.

Choose what you engage with online
- Examine & reduce your feeds:
- Do some groups and people you follow bait or trigger you? Do you have others that carry the same content, but in a helpful way that induces reflection, education, and action with less anger and helplessness?
- Can you find organizations & groups that post calming, rejuvenating content?

Choose who you engage with online
- Stop & Think
- What do you hope to accomplish by engaging
- Is this a stranger or friend? Friends are a better bet for changing minds.

If you engage
- Try to assume the person means well (expressed it poorly, doesn’t understand)
- Describe why you are engaging “I want to understand your view,” “I think you are saying ... and wanted to share some information you may not know.” Avoid using “you” statements and emphasize “I” statements
- Read your text out loud. Doing this can help you consider what you wrote from different points of view. This may help to avoid assumptions on how others will react or stereotyping possible responses
- Disengage if signs indicate further divide: name calling, distorting what you have stated, quoting you out of context, and just won’t stop.
- Depending on the platform, find how to unfollow the message.
**SELF SOOTHE**

**HOW TO DEAL WITH ELECTION ANXIETY**

**CONNECT TO YOU: WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MY BODY & MIND RIGHT NOW?**

- Are my muscles tight?
- Are my thoughts solely on the negative?
- Is my breathing and heart rate faster?
- Are my thoughts connecting to bad memories of abuse or previous racial and ethnic harm?
- Do thoughts of the election intrude most of the time?

**SEEK WAYS TO SELF SOOTHE**

Activate the parasympathetic response:

- Exercise/Stretch your muscles to trigger looseness
- You can also use Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or active breathing like "Breath of Joy" in these links

Focus on breathing deeply, in for 4, out for 8

- Use resources that provide guided breathing and meditation like TAO, available through the Counseling Center & apps like Liberate & Insight Timer that can help you work with certain emotions or experiences like racism.

Practice Self Compassion

- Acknowledge that you are struggling and what you are struggling with (election, bad memories of abuse, racism, negative experiences, harm caused by others related to your sexuality or gender)
- Identify that you are NOT ALONE in these struggles
- Use some kind affirmations: May I be kind to myself, May I give myself some compassion, May I give myself what I need. Need a guided example? Check out Dr. Neff’s site.

Find Comfort

- Engage your senses: wear or surround yourself with soft things, drink something warm, listening to calming music or go outside to listen to nature sounds, seek out soothing things to look at, experiment with different tastes

Broaden your Lens to include the good

- Take time to find the positives even small ones in your day or week
- Practice Gratitude: write down 3 things you are grateful for each day or team up with a friend and share them.
- Can you find good parts of this election experience? Connected with like minded people? Learned more about issues facing the country/your town?
- Check out an app like Shine to help with daily self care.
**KEEPING THINGS IN FOCUS DURING THE ELECTION**

The voting process, waiting, being bombarded with political ads, fears that inequalities and violence will increase, and feeds taken over by arguments can be STRESSFUL.

**ARE YOU FEELING**

Dazed  
Out of Focus,  
Struggling to Control  
Thoughts of the Election  
Hypervigilant about the election  
or Angry?

These are all signs that you need to rebalance & connect to refueling activities and people that recharge you.

We can handle elections and other life challenges better when we reduce other stresses on our bodies and minds.

**BASIC STEPS TO REFUELING:**

**FOCUS ON CARING FOR YOURSELF**

Eat balanced meals  
Protect your sleep  
Exercise

**TAKE REFUELING A STEP FURTHER:**

- Connect with supportive, safe friends virtually & let them know that you are struggling.  
- Utilize techniques & resources to connect with your spirituality  
- Spend time in nature  
- Immerse yourself in a passion (hobby, major, reading, volunteering)  
- Find resources that target specific fears & healing while handling adversity.
RESOURCES

LEARN MORE ABOUT VOTING

NATIONAL

Voting Rights (www.aclu.org)
- If the polls close while you’re still in line, stay in line – you have the right to vote.
- If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one.
- If the machines are down at your polling place, ask for a paper ballot.
- If you run into any problems or have questions on Election Day, call the Election Protection Hotline

Election Protection Hotline
- English:
  - 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
- Spanish:
  - 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
- Arabic:
  - 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287
- For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese:
  - 1-888-274-8683

LOCAL

SC Voter Protection Line
- 1-855-785-0222

SC Voting Information
- Check you registration, sample ballots, polling locations and more
- https://www.scvotes.gov

Charleston County Voting Information
- Local information polling locations, early voting locations (absentee in person).
- Poll Manager applications
- https://vote.charlestoncounty.org/

Candidate Information
Information on Presidential Candidates, US Senators & Representatives is often easy to find, but what about the other races?
- Local Papers often post article that are question and answer based. This style of article is more likely to be more unbiased.
- Websites that aim to be unbiased:
  - https://ballotpedia.org
  - https://www.vote411.org/
RESOURCES
FURTHER SUPPORT

ON CAMPUS:

Students4Support:
M - Thur 12-9pm
Text: "4support" to 839.863
Zoom also available

Counseling Center at CofC:
Call for appt.: 843.953.5640
https://counseling.cofc.edu

Supportive & Refueling Resources:
Office of Institutional Diversity:
https://diversity.cofc.edu/diversity-resources/

Resource for Race Related Violence:
https://counseling.cofc.edu/resources-for-race-relate-violence/index.php

Multicultural Students Programs & Services:
https://counseling.cofc.edu/resources-for-race-relate-violence/index.php

Student Groups & Organizations:
https://cougarconnect.cofc.edu/organizations

OFF CAMPUS:

One on One Support

Crisis Text Line
Text: "HOME" to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call 1.800.272.8255

Steve Fund Crisis Text Line
Available for young people of color
Text: STEVE" to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

Trevor Lifeline
Trained specialists to connect with LGBTQ+ community
Call: 1.866.488.7386
Text: "START" to 678678

Hyperlinks in this Kit

Self-Soothe
https://soundcloud.com/cofcmeditationclub
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL_CTZ2Aaxk
https://liberatemeditation.com
https://insighttimer.com
https://self-compassion.org/
https://www.theshineapp.com/

Refuel
https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-build-healthy-meal
https://www.self.com/story/sleep-apps
https://campusrec.cofc.edu
https://www.mhanational.org/bipoc-mental-health