POST ELECTION STRESS GUIDE

TIPS FOR POST ELECTION STRESS AND UNCERTAINTIES

CofC Mental Health Education

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**PLAN & PREPARE**

For the good & bad days

Having plans for after the election, regardless of the outcome can be helpful in managing election stress and anxiety. When we have bad days or do not get our desired outcome, it can be hard to see clearly. Planning ahead can be used as a safety net during these stressful times.

### Making Practical Plans:

1. **Meal Prep**
   Prepare some food ahead of time if you anticipate you not wanting to cook or shop later in the week.

2. **Clear your space, clear your mind**
   Knock out some important tasks, like cleaning your room or doing laundry, especially if clutter produces negative feelings for you.

3. **Adjust your schedule**
   If you can, rearrange some commitments or lighten your load. This will help you avoid having a lot to do in the event you feel emotionally compromised.

4. **Make some action plans**
   The less energy you have to spend on deciding what to do, the better. Make some action plans for the good and bad days ahead!

### Making a Good & Bad Day Plan:

1. **Decide on 2-3 non-negotiable tasks**
   Choose small commitments you can make even when you'd rather do nothing at all: open the curtains, eat, shower, etc.)

2. **Add 1 or 2 negotiable tasks**
   What are things that make you happier than you already are? What are small things that give you comfort when upset?

3. **Write out a few questions**
   On good days ask yourself: "Who helps me feel more joy?" "What can I give today?"
   On bad days: "Who do I want to speak to?" "What would make me smile?"

4. **Use affirmations**
   Read affirmations throughout the day: "You're doing what you can." or "I am proud of your hard work." Or listen to your favorite music, movie, podcasts, etc.
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?

What else can you try?

- Stick to your routine
  - Eat healthy, stay active, get enough sleep
- Engage in enjoyable and meaningful activities
- Give yourself some "me" time
- Limit your social media time
  - (see resources for link)
- Limit political debate & arguments
  - (see resources for link)
- Spend time with supportive friends and family
- Set goals for yourself & focus on the here and now

TIPS FOR HOW 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, that can help you work with certain emotions or experiences like racism.

Broaden your Lens to include the good

- Take time to find even the small positives 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? What can you control/do?
- Check out an app like Shine to help with daily self care.

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
DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

Remember that uncertainty is an expected and common part of our lives. Despite this, our brains do not like uncertainty and indecision, especially big uncertainty like a "too close" big election. Use these skills to help you get through this waiting period.

Take stock
Feelings are a signal to our mind to observe and review what is going on. Tuning in and acknowledging them can decrease their intensity.

- What are you feeling? Grief about the potential of a different type of future?
- Anxiety? Overwhelmed at all the changes needed in the world?
- Disillusionment? A degree of hopelessness in our ability to influence people in power.

Remember
The mind has a negativity bias: we are programmed to remember, pay attention to, and learn more from negative things. When we are overwhelmed, it is common to fall into thinking errors like:

- **Catastrophic thinking:** predicting a negative outcome and that the outcome will have the worst possible consequences.
- **Black and white thinking:** viewing a situation as an either 100% positive or 100% negative situation.

How to work with negativity bias & overthinking
- Redirect thoughts to the present or future. We cannot change any event leading up to the election that has already occurred.
- Counter your uncertain and worst possible outcome thoughts. For example:
  - Our democratic system has overcome significant challenges in the past
  - There are more change opportunities than Presidential elections
  - Polarization of parties is a strategy. Most individual candidates have more similarities than complete opposite views.
  - Great steps have been made in times when it seemed impossible.
- Utilize Distraction (see page 2 & 3 for ideas)
- Meditation: use Liberate, Shine & Insight Timer for guided meditations on handling uncertainty.
Acceptance is acknowledging what has happened and cannot be changed, how we feel (uncertain, grief, anxiety, fear, and disillusionment), and using how things are versus how they should be to decide what is next.

- It is not approving or agreeing
- It is not passive resignation
- It is not avoidance.

How do we move forward?

- Acknowledging what has happened
  - We have to wait in limbo for election results
  - My preferred candidate/party didn’t win
- Explore and label your feelings.
- Decide next steps

Learn More

- What drew you to this election: (Pandemic Response, Racial Injustices, Economy, Healthcare, Policing). Take a class or set aside time to learn more about these more deeply
- Research: Find organizations and groups that are like minded and are working to change policy.

Civic Duty

- Civic duty doesn’t end at the ballot box
- Continue to make your voice heard by calling and emailing your elected officials. Find who they are here.
- Follow legislation & Speak up about issues that are important to you.

Look for hope

- Just because your candidate isn’t elected, it doesn’t mean there’s no hope for things you believe in
- Find organizations & groups that work toward helping the hot button issues for you in this election.

Prospection

- Envisioning a positive future makes you more resilient in the present
- Be proactive in what you’d like to see for your country’s future
November 3 @ 4pm
The 2020 Presidential Election: Conjectures and Consequences (Part I)

November 10 @ 4pm
The 2020 Presidential Election: Conjectures and Consequences (Part II)
Hyperlinks in this Kit

- https://www.instagram.com/p/CG-VEYVhovm/
  - View "Unplug & Setting Boundaries" for tips on how to limit social media use and political arguments/discussions
- Meditation apps
  - https://liberatemeditation.com/
  - https://www.theshineapp.com/
  - https://insighttimer.com/
- Contacting elected officials
  - https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials
  - https://5calls.org/
- Post Election Talks
  - November 3rd at 4 pm: https://bit.ly/33BThmT
  - November 10th at 4 pm: https://bit.ly/33BThmT

Article Related Resources

- https://www.cbsnews.com/news/post-election-day-dates-deadlines/Details about election dates that may help to soothe stress while waiting for the results of the election dealing with uncertainty
- https://www.inc.com/erik-sherman/5-steps-to-overcome-disappointment-even-after-the-election.html
  - Article about the 5 steps to overcome election disappointment.
  - Article about the mindfulness. Explains mindfulness, how it works, how to practice, and how to avoid ruminating