

Providence College

Guidebook to Handling Stress



*Presented to you by Management students:
Annelise Rice, Elyse Pereira, Megan Dowling,
Morgan Perry, and Nora Johnson*

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Introduction:

Dear Providence College,

We write to you with an awareness of the strenuous dilemma posed to us under these unforeseeable circumstances. Education, in general, produces immense stress for students, with a vast array of assignments, from lab reports to final exams. This phenomenon, of learning as a substantial stressor, provoked a genuine interest in our studies, as we have each encountered significant, stress-inducing obstacles both related and unrelated to schoolwork.

Over the course of the past several months, we embarked on a journey of self-discovery. We extensively researched anxiety, through reading material and presentations, in our independent study with Management Chair, Dr. Matthew Eriksen. We would be delighted to share our understandings and insights with you, as they pertain to the challenging situation at hand. We hope that a student's perspective resonates with you more prominently and will assist you in combating your current concerns.

Speaking from my own personal experience as an exceptionally stress-prone individual, I assure you that your worries do not define you. Anxiety is an entity separate from your unique identity. It is something that you experience, not a component of who you are. In the past, a continuous and daunting stream of homework frequently overwhelmed me and overshadowed other parts of my life. I would attend to the tasks assigned to me, allowing my mental and physical states to deteriorate in the process. I have sacrificed time that should have been dedicated to relationships, exercise, and above all else the pure enjoyment of life, in attempts to achieve my future success.

The strain you may suffer for a teacher's positive appraisal or to obtain the perfect GPA is not worth overlooking your mental and physical health. I encourage you to find balance, to employ your stressors, your aggravators, and your inconveniences to motivate you towards an appreciation of the people and the causes you care for most notably in life. Recognize the underlying meaning of your worries. The care you hold for relationships may surface as social anxiety. The importance you place on receiving high grades may indicate your value of achievement. Attempt to uncover your passions within your anxieties. Set goals for yourself in all aspects of your life, never allowing excessive stress in one area to come at the expense of your progress in another.

Indisputably, my family is my most significant value. I could let "Zoom University" incite uncontestable distress within me, but instead, why not celebrate the family moments profited from this hurdle? Centralize your attention on your values, rather than your hardships, and pursue only that which will draw you nearer to genuine happiness. Consider how this experience can be a catalyst for your development as a human being. How can it help you to realize your potential? How can it drive you to serve others in a positive fashion?

Sincerely,

Elyse Pereira, Class of 2022

Management and Psychology Double Major, Spanish Minor

COVID-19 Worries:

To those concerned about COVID-19 consequences,

Fear of the unknown is a large contributor to the stress and anxiety of college students that are now being forced to leave their schools and continue learning online. While downloading and installing Zoom may be easy, it is important to be aware of the mental transition and its impact on us. Students learn in different ways, so online course work can be extremely difficult for students who prefer experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, students all handle stress and anxiety in different ways. Through our research, we have discovered that there is no cure-all solution, but we want to stress that it is crucial to find the method that's right for you.

On top of school-related stress, social distancing can be a major cause of anxiety in a time like this. As developing young adults that have just been pulled out of one of the most socially demanding environments that we experience (college), this is a huge transition. Human interaction often causes immense happiness and stress relief, and it can especially be helpful as an avoidance technique to escape other anxieties. With a lack of physical social interaction, we may begin to get more stressed. And, if you're anything like I am, just the thought of social distancing can trigger anxiety.

Through what I have learned about mindfulness, we are constantly creating stories in our heads. We are not just inventing them, they are being offered up to by outlets trying to capture our attention often through terrorizing us. As COVID-19 escalates, have you invented a story in your mind about what will happen next? If you have, understand that this is totally normal. But, the solution to this story making is to try and intervene when this process begins. If you can start intercepting this storytelling then you are able to be in control of your thoughts and more able to manage any stress that arises from this.

Lastly, it is important to understand the relationship between stress and purpose. We as human beings are unique and have our own purpose for existence. When we worry, it is because we are worried about something or someone that we care about. This directly aligns with our values. If you are worried about this pandemic because it gets in the way of your education, you should focus on and appreciate that this highlights your passion for learning. If you are worried due to the fear of losing a family member, you should understand this is your strong love for that person manifesting as anxiety. In a time of fear and chaos, take a moment to understand the meaning of your worry and what it says about yourself and your values.

Sincerely,

Morgan Perry, Class of 2022

Senior Class Concerns:

Dear Seniors,

As I look outside my kitchen window in the suburbs of New Jersey, I'm cringing at the fact that it is not my porch overlooking Eaton Street. I'm thinking about the fact that I'm taking the rest of my last semester of Providence College classes at home. I'm also thinking about the fact that I still don't have a job upon graduation.

I know that all the seniors at Providence College are going through similar thoughts. Thoughts of, "My entire year is ruined," "What if I lose contact with my friends," "What if our graduation never happens."

I feel your pain. When I heard the news about class being online for the rest of the semester, I thought about the day I got into PC. I remember I walked into my living room where my sister and my mom sat smiling with a big envelope on the table. I opened the envelope and immediately started bursting with tears because I was so happy. And now, I cried because I feel that it all has come to an end.

But we're too special of a class for it to all end just like that. We know how to have fun, we know how to lead the campus, and we work hard to succeed. Our class will always be remembered for what's happened during our final semester here, and that's why every time we come back home, it will be like a giant "golf party."

We cannot forget the strength of the Friar Family. The strength of the bonds we have made with just our class alone, the strength of our alumni network to help us with jobs, and the strength of our ability to have a good time no matter what the situation may be. I know that any time I wear a Providence College shirt, I'm bound to get into a conversation with a stranger no matter where I am in the world because the Friar bond is unbreakable.

We must stick together as a Friar Family. Reach out to your fellow seniors and Friars during this time as we all try to stay focused on what is important as we try to keep ourselves and others healthy.

Your Fellow Friar,
Nora Johnson '20

An open letter to Seniors:

First and foremost I just want to say: you're not alone. I know how confused, anxious, and saddened you all must be feeling- but we are all in this together, class of 2020. This is uncharted territory for all of us, and it is important to acknowledge our emotions; in a way, this is a time of mourning for us, and that is completely okay.

Senior year looks a lot different than it did a few weeks ago. The last couple of months of late-night Golden Crust, beers at Brads, and study sessions in Ryan have been cut short, and while we try to put on a brave face, we must come to terms with the reality of our emotions. It is okay to be sad, it is okay to be stressed, and most importantly; it is okay to not be okay.

There is no doubt that this pandemic is causing us anxiety and stress, and if you have time I would encourage you to engage in practices that can help alleviate these feelings. Whatever you go through you get through, and the necessary resources should be utilized to ease this stress.

“And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed, And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal. And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.” - Kitty O’Meara

This quote can offer great comfort during this tumultuous time, if you allow it to. I think it's important to live up to this quote to challenge ourselves; challenge yourself to know “you” better, get things done that you’ve always put off. Clean your closet, get into great shape, really get to know your loved ones during this time of quarantine. Improve your relationships, find new hobbies, and look at this as a time to focus on yourself. All that background noise, all those distractions, are gone--finally! And while it might be scary (which is completely normal), if you use this time to focus on you, you’ll come out of this better than ever.

Ask questions, stay in the know, take precautions, but do not let your anxieties take over your life. Remember, that “Fear can be paralyzing and counterproductive in times of uncertainty” (-anonymous). Face that fear, it's still your senior year, we once again will smile ear to ear.

We are all in this together, class of 2020.

Warmest regards,
Megan Dowling ‘20

Athlete Related Anxiety:

Dear Student-Athletes,

To start, I'd just like to say that I am sorry for everything that you are going through. For some of you, your season just ended. For others, your chance at the playoffs ended. And for a few, your season ended before it even began. As for all of us, we are all torn from our closest friends in the time of need.

At this time, no one can tell you how you are feeling or how you are supposed to be feeling. The sport that you have loved and played since a young age has been ripped from you. It's understandable to feel like everything is falling to pieces because this is a new and unfounded situation that is unlike any other injury or sports trauma that you have faced. As an athlete, we have grown up focusing on this sport every day of our lives and now is the time to continue to do so.

Continue to focus on dedication and persistence. The time and work that you have put in for your sport will not be forgotten. The perseverance that it takes to be a collegiate athlete will give you an advantage over individuals in difficult times, such as these.

Just remember, "what doesn't kill you makes you, by definition, a survivor, about whom people then say, 'I could never survive what Y is going through.' One of the most common lessons people draw from bereavement or trauma is that they are much stronger than they realized, and this new appreciation of their strength then gives them confidence to face future challenges" (*The Happiness Hypothesis*). So even though it is a devastating time right now for all athletes just remember that you are stronger than you think. You will be stronger having faced this challenge

This doesn't mean you have to stand alone. As athletes we must continue to use our teammates... family*... in this time of need. Keep in touch with your teammates and use them as a way to get through this trauma. No one understands what you are going through more than them.

Considering your main coping method has been taken away from you please consider our other methods below. They are used to increase happiness and decrease anxiety. They are also a great experiment to try while you are stuck in quarantine or isolation.

Best,
Annelise Rice

Stress-Reducing Exercises:

Through our research, we have discovered and implemented various techniques to reduce our stress and anxiety. A great way to look at the anxiety that this virus provokes is envisioning it as a wave. Although in this case, it may seem more like a tsunami. We invite you to ride this wave of anxiety. Just let it come in and recognize that it will pass. Allow it to run its course and don't let yourself drown.

Two methods that we have studied and found effective have been DARE and ACT.

- *DARE: The DARE Response* contains four main parts, defuse, allow, run toward, and engage. Train yourself to use this method by acknowledging your anxious thoughts as they develop, allow the partnering experiences to exist, face the feelings head-on, and shift your energy towards meaningful aspects of your life.
- *ACT: The ACT approach*, or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, encourages individuals to accept the more difficult things in their lives, rather than try to avoid them. It focuses on using the stress of being passionate about something to your advantage.. Below we have attached some exercises that can be used to guide your thoughts by using ACT.

We'd like to leave you with a few ideas of how you can positively handle this unfortunate situation. As previously mentioned, methods of combating stress are unique to each individual person. We urge you to experiment with altering tactics and to hopefully discover one that works best for you.

1. Exercise

2. Relax with music, television, or movies

3. Mindfulness

- a). Connect to the world around you: Attend to your five senses.
- b). Focus on your breath: Implement deep-belly breathing.
- c). Practice grounding: Make contact with the Earth by walking barefoot outside.

4. Journal

- a). Life Map: What's important to you? What gets in the way of you moving toward what's important to you? What behaviors do you do to move away from that which worries you? What behaviors can you do to move toward who and what's important to you?
- b). Tree of Life: Draw a tree. Fill in the roots with where you come from, the ground with activities you enjoy doing, the trunk with your skills and values, the branches with your hopes and dreams, the leaves with those who are significant to you and who have impacted your life, the fruits with legacies passed on to you, the flowers and seeds with

legacies you wish to leave behind, and a compost heap with any negative things in your life that hold you back

c). Imagining your future self: Visualize who you are surrounded by, where you are, and what career path you ventured down. Brainstorm what steps you can take towards obtaining future happiness

5. Routine Hacks from Home

- a) Set up bedtimes and wake up times; Catch up on your sleep and keep it consistent!
- b) Get out of bed as soon as you wake up (rather than scrolling through TikTok for an hour lol)
 - i) Save your bed as a place only for sleep at the end of the day, so it will be easier to fall asleep
- c) Do your morning hygiene routine as you would going to school or work
- d) Put on clothes that make you feel GOOD!
- e) Eat a breakfast that makes you energized (fruit, oatmeal, coffee)
- f) Do your work/homework in an upright position (preferably a table rather than your bed)
- g) GET OUTSIDE! Run, bike, scooter, Ripstick, shoot hoops, pogo stick
- h) Stretch, watch workout-from-home videos, meditate
- i) Pick up a hobby (knit, learn how to juggle, garden, cook, read, clean your room!)
- j) Decide on an allotted time to do your work during the day and save the other time to spend with family or better yourself
- k) Express what you're grateful for in a journal, to friends, family

Contact Information:

If you have any questions regarding the activities we suggested, our own personal experiences, or our general study of anxiety, please feel free to reach out to us!



Annelise Rice
Business Psychology (Individualized Studies)
Class of 2021
arice5@friars.providence.edu



Elyse Pereira
Management and Psychology, Spanish
Class of 2022
epereir1@friars.providence.edu



Megan Dowling
Psychology and Business Innovation Studies
Class of 2020
mdowlin3@friars.providence.edu



Morgan Perry
Management and French
Class of 2022
mperry6@friars.providence.edu



Nora Johnson
Management
Class of 2020
njohnso4@friars.providence.edu