

Dear UTokyo Students

Our community is facing unprecedented challenges due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (the 2019 novel Coronavirus). Here are several ways to take care of your mental health during this stressful time.

1. Stay informed and take action to prevent the spread of the disease
2. Understand the typical psychological responses to stressful situations
3. Develop healthy coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety
4. Stay connected and avoid complete isolation

1. Stay informed and take action to prevent the spread of the disease

Please check the UTokyo Health Service Center's website regularly to stay updated about COVID-19.

Young, college-aged students have also been developing severe symptoms. However, because younger people tend to have few or no symptoms, you or anyone around you may be infected without knowing it. We urge you to follow basic protective measures to prevent the spread of the infection. Your cooperation is important in keeping our healthcare system from collapsing like we've seen in many countries around the world.

The basic protective measures are as follows:

1. After entering a building, wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds.
2. When talking to people, keep at least two meters of distance between you.
3. The risk of spreading infection increases when eating, so keep others at a greater distance than usual during meals.
4. If you have cold-like symptoms or otherwise feel ill, avoid close contact with people and refrain from going out. Make sure to take necessary precautions if you live with someone else.
5. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. Cough or sneeze into a mask or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. Throw used tissues in the trash.
7. Clean and disinfect frequently touched areas with alcohol, bleach, or other equally effective substances

Learn More About COVID-19

Center for Disaster Management and Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

2. Understand the typical psychological responses to stressful situations

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. It is normal to feel a variety of emotions. Reactions to stress vary in timing and intensity. Some people also develop physical, rather than emotional, symptoms in response to a stressful situation. Do not blame yourself for feeling unwell or feel pressured to recover quickly.

- You may feel anxious or worried that you may be infected or spread the virus to others. You may feel stressed about having to make changes to your daily routine.
- You may also feel uneasy and worried about your future.
- Extended periods of time spent at home may cause feelings of boredom and loneliness.
- The loss of agency and personal freedom can make you feel frustrated and angry.
- You may experience psychological distress because support and care are not available as usual.

3 Develop healthy coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety

- Take care of your body. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise, and get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories...even on social media. Too much exposure to the news can be upsetting and lead to increased feelings of anxiety.
- Try to shift your focus on what you can do in the present moment. This may include simple tasks such as cleaning or doing the laundry, or stress-relieving fun activities such as listening to music, watching movies, reading books, or enjoying delicious food. Try not to think ahead too much.
- Try using self-care online tools and mobile applications. Some keywords for searches include "*mindfulness*", "*meditation*", "*breathing*", "*emotion*", "*thought*", "*diary*", and "*record*". Keeping a daily gratitude journal could also help you monitor yourself and stay calm.

4 Stay connected and avoid complete isolation

Your face-to-face interactions may be limited, but you can still stay connected virtually by using phone calls, messaging, or social media. Reach out to those you know are in a similar situation so you can share your feelings and take care of each other.

【References】

- University Responses to Coronavirus Disease:
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- American Psychological Association (2020). Keeping Your Distance to Stay Safe.
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- Texas A&M University “Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19”:
<https://caps.tamu.edu/mental-health-coping-during-covid-19/>
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