Opportunity to participate in a Virtual Wellness Circle

Dear Students:

I hope this message finds you well and beginning to adjust to our new normal. Although we are all under stress with the global COVID 19 pandemic, graduate students are particularly vulnerable. Restrictions on laboratory access and travel to research sites may prompt concerns about productivity and students’ ability to make timely progress towards their degrees. Social distancing recommendations put forth by public health officials, can lead to social isolation which has the potential to be especially challenging for graduate students who may live alone, not have family and friends close by, or not have family or friends who understand the unique challenges (e.g. loss of access to laboratory and field experiences necessary to conduct their research) that graduate students face during this pandemic. *It is important for you to be very kind to yourself at this time.* Circumstances are definitely not under your control. Other people know this and understand that our current situation may hamper your progress.

In addition to being kind to yourself, please consider joining Shahnaz Khawaja Assistant Director of Resilience and Recovery Strategies in the office of Student Wellness in a **Virtual Wellness Circle**. Shahnaz Khawaja has led mental health projects overseas in times of crisis and is familiar with some of the stressors that come along with large scale crisis such as natural disasters, war, terror attacks etc. In times of crisis, our brains tend to go into full on fight/flight, which is effective ONLY if we are in **immediate and life-threatening** danger. Our bodies are not intended to exist in fight/flight states for more than a few hours or our body systems will begin to exhaust and shut down into a numbed out, freeze state. *This is unhealthy.*

Shahnaz will talk about ways to turn off the body’s fight/flight response and how to engage in activities that will allow us to remain calm and navigate the current situation from our most effective, creative and problem-solving brain. During these wellness circles you will participate in some;

- mindfulness and meditation exercises
- physical movement related stress release
- EFT tapping
- strategies to tone your vagus nerve which helps in stress reduction that will include
  - chanting
  - loud singing
  - increasing salivation
  - loud gargling with water
- laughter to reduce stress
- camaraderie and virtual social connection

What to bring
- YOU!
- An open mind
- Humor
- A cup of warm water (trust us, this will make sense later)
- A willingness to take a risk and try something outside of your comfort zone to help you feel better

Although the coronavirus pandemic is serious and alarming, we hope to provide you with strategies that prevent you from being in the high alert fight/flight state for an extended period of time. I hope you will consider participating in our Virtual Wellness Circles.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Meeting Link</th>
<th>Meeting ID</th>
<th>Password</th>
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<td>April 8</td>
<td>4:00-5:00 EDT</td>
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**To join the Zoom meeting:**

1. Select Single Sign On (SSO)
2. Domain Name = UNC
3. Enter your onyen information

Please use the information below and meeting information in table above if you wish to connect by phone:

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,108404728# US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,108404728# US (New York)

Dial by your location

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