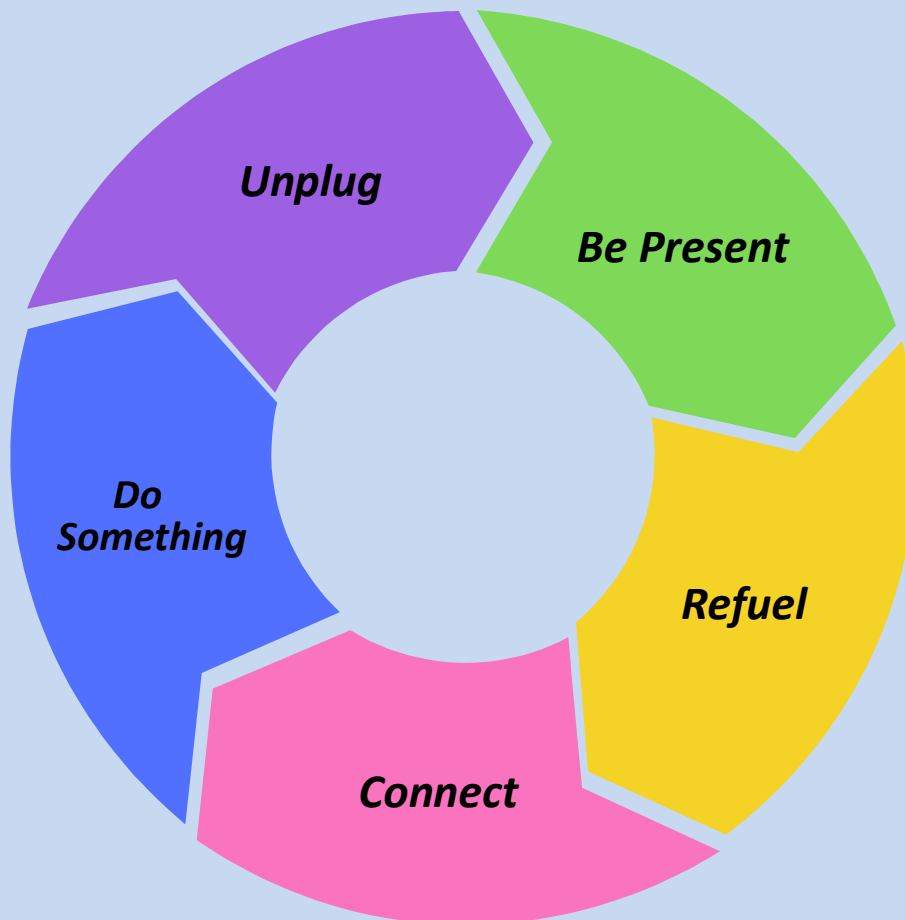


# Election Stress Kit

Tips and Resources to cope with the current national discourse



**UNPLUG:** Limit your consumption of social media and the 24-hour non-stop images. It's important to stay informed, but creating boundaries is important.

**BE PRESENT:** Use reflection to recognize your inner thoughts and feelings. Be curious and non-judgmental and give yourself permission to feel the way you do. Although avoiding can be useful, "stuffing" or ignoring strong emotions can have negative impacts.

**REFUEL:** Focus on restoring yourself with rest and healthy food. Drink water and try to limit caffeine. Move a little every day. Take a walk; look at the sky; be in nature. Journal or meditate. Make art or watch funny videos. Read something fun.

**CONNECT:** Engage with supportive friends and allies. Talk about current issues, if needed, but be aware of when you're feeling overwhelmed. Not everyone will share your perspective, so it's OK to limit your topics and avoid heated conflict. Reach out to supportive services on-campus, including UCS by calling 804-828-6200 or checking out [counseling.vcu.edu](https://counseling.vcu.edu).

**DO SOMETHING:** Channel what you're feeling into positive, meaningful activity. Be informed and proactive around issues that matter to you. Find ways to engage in your community through advocacy in ways that fit for you.

# UNPLUG

## Stay informed, but know your limits:

Monitor how you feel after news consumption. Feeling preoccupied by national events may be a sign to cut back on your news intake and limit social media discussions.

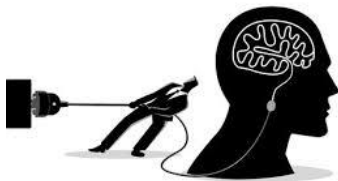


Consider scheduling a short block of time in the morning and the evening to catch up on news without checking for every new update during the day.



*During “digital breaks,” take time to focus on something enjoyable, such as a hobby, exercising, being in nature or spending time with family and friends.*

Check out [this video](#) for some more tips for “unplugging” during a stressful election time.






# BE PRESENT

Consider practicing **self-compassion** as you work through challenging or uncertain times. Try some of [these](#) exercises compiled by Dr. Kristin Neff, a renowned researcher of self-compassion.

Grab your phone and your earbuds and head outside for a guided [mindful walk](#) to de-stress.

## Meditation and Mindfulness Apps

### Overall Downloads

- 1  Calm
- 2  Headspace
- 3  Insight Timer
- 4  Aura
- 5  Simple Habit
- 6  Breathe
- 7  10% Happier
- 8  BetterMe
- 9  Pacifica
- 10  Abide

[This](#) Youtube channel offers introductory videos to mindfulness and guided meditations.

UCS would like to acknowledge that mindfulness originated in Eastern spiritual traditions, namely Buddhism, and has since been popularized in Western countries in ways inconsistent with its original purpose.

## SELF-SOOTHING

Self-soothing is a quick and effective way to reduce the intensity of negative emotions.



### Sight

Low lighting  
Soothing colors  
Sleeping masks  
Coloring books  
Pinterest Collages

### Touch

Soft things  
Cuddle things  
Massage  
Hot/cold shower  
Heated/weighted blanket



### Sound

Calming noise  
ASMR videos  
Nature sounds  
Guided meditations  
Binaural beats



### Smell

Aromatherapy  
Fresh air  
Candles/incense  
Comforting smells



### Taste

Strong flavors  
Warm drinks  
Eat slowly  
Nostalgic flavors



[www.blessingmanifesting.com](http://www.blessingmanifesting.com)

Listen to nature and [soothing Tibetan singing bowls](#)

## Grounding

Grounding strategies can help us get in touch with our bodies and surroundings in the present moment. Pause what you are doing and pay attention to what you can see, hear, smell, and touch in your environment.

# REFUEL

## Balance

A national election during COVID? Focusing on your well-being is more important than ever! Trying to keep a balance in most areas of your life will help you roll through challenging days more smoothly and keep you on the road to wellness!



## Eating and Nutrition

For tips, guidelines, and health information, this is a [great resource!](#)

Need support in accessing food?

Contact Ram Pantry at [rampantry@vcu.edu](mailto:rampantry@vcu.edu) or

804-828-4514.



## Sleep

Is your sleep schedule irregular? Are you sleeping more than you want to be? Are you having [trouble falling asleep](#)? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," you may benefit from these [sleep hygiene tips and resources!](#)



## Exercise

VCU Rec Sports offers a wide variety of [virtual fitness and wellness programming](#).

Popsugar offers [more resources](#) for healthy habits!

# CONNECT

## Five ways to build stronger connections

- 01 Write a letter
- 02 Pick up the phone and call
- 03 Ask meaningful questions
- 04 Answer questions with honesty
- 05 Connect via video

COMPASS

Robert Reffkin, Founder & CEO

## Why Connect?

- ◆ To decrease loneliness, stress, depression, and anxiety
- ◆ To acknowledge collective trauma and experience solidarity
- ◆ To experiencing love and belonging
- ◆ To give and receive care and compassion

## Connecting..connecting.... connecting....

*Zoom fatigue is real*, but sometimes it's our only option. So how do we connect without MORE stress? Try these tips:

- Establish "no screen" blocks of time in your day – times when you don't have classes, meetings, etc. (See "UNPLUG" above)
- While turning off your camera during class can be a relief, make sure you don't do it all the time. Leaving your camera on, even if you can only see your instructor and one other brave student, can help you feel connected and more focused on content.
- Avoid multi-tasking. Even though it can be tempting to use more than one device at a time or check emails and respond to texts while Zooming, focusing on the content of the meeting will actually give your brain a break! And we all need a bit more peace and focus right now!

## Connecting Virtually

- ◆ Zoom dance party
- ◆ [Netflix Party](#)
- ◆ [House Party](#) App
- ◆ TikTok Challenges
- ◆ Virtual group workouts

- [Amazing support groups](#) for EVERYONE and all topics!
- Virtual book clubs
- Virtual karaoke on Google Hangouts

## Spiritual Connection

Spirituality can be one way to connect with yourself, others, nature, or a higher power(s).



### [Loving-kindness meditation](#)

Find local or online spiritual communities

### [Animal/Nature live cams!](#)

Image Description: three orange flowers.

# DO SOMETHING

It can be challenging to stay motivated when everything around us seems chaotic and scary. But doing something – some action, no matter how small – can lessen some of the uncertainty.

What you do doesn't need to be political – taking a step to stand up for or stand in for a person or a cause or the environment means *we're not powerless*. Check out the ideas on this page!

Learn  
about  
Vision  
Boards  
[here.](#)

## Connect with your Values

Identifying what is important to us can be one way to foster motivation. Try one of the values card sorts below and then consider how you can express your values on a daily basis.

- ◆ [Online values card sort](#)
- ◆ [Printable version](#)

## Lean on your STRENGTHS

Knowing your strengths can help you address problems more effectively and engage in activities that generate confidence and purpose.

Try taking the [VIA Character Strengths Survey](#) to identify your strongest traits.

## Wholeness

Think about what makes you feel whole, grounded, or like *you*.  
*It can be helpful to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.*



Image from simplepsychology.org  
Image includes multi-colored tiered pyramid.



# Additional Resources

## Campus Resources

[University Student Health Services](#)  
[Dean of Students Office](#)  
[VCU Rec Sports](#)  
[Office of Multicultural Student Affairs](#)  
[Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity](#)  
[VCU Globe](#)  
[Career Services](#)  
[Campus Learning Center](#)  
[Health Promotion and Well-Being Center](#)



Image description: 5 colorful hands coming together in a circle.

THANK YOU to our colleagues at other institutions for sharing their resources. Some information in this document was adapted from Penn State University, Michigan State University and California State University at Long Beach.



Visit [University Counseling Services](#) or call us at 804-828-6200.

We are offering all of our services virtually, including individual and group therapy, identity-based support groups, Advocacy services, and case management.

Follow UCS on social media!



Questions and concerns about mental health? Check out the [JED Foundation's Mental Health Resource Center](#).

## NEED IMMEDIATE SUPPORT?

If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, call us 24/7/365 at 804-828-6200 to speak to a crisis clinician.