

Daily exposure to news about COVID-19 may result in a range of responses, particularly for students with loved ones in China and other affected areas of the world. Reactions can be emotional, somatic, and/or behavioral, and can impact mental and physical health.

This document is intended to support community members with loved ones whose daily lives and well-being have been affected by COVID-19. Please know that we have been following the news as it evolves, and we are here to support you.

This document contains information about common stress reactions, responses specific to the COVID-19 outbreak, coping strategies, and how to handle potential experiences of bias or discrimination.

Common Stress Reactions:

- Feeling shock, or feeling disconnected from reality
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Significant changes in appetite
- Poor sleep quality, difficulty falling asleep or sustaining sleep, difficulty staying awake; nightmares
- Headache, stomachache, stuffiness in chest, GI problems, shortness of breath, or pain without clear medical causes
- Feeling detached, numb
- Losing hope for the future, feeling lost; lack of motivation for school or work
- Feeling fearful and anxious about death and one's future
- Ruminating, being preoccupied, and obsessing with information about the outbreak
- Using alcohol or other substances to cope

You may also experience the following reactions specific to the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Frequently worrying about contamination, preoccupation with any signs/symptoms of illness, excessively taking temperature, frequent visits to the health center for checkups. Such worries may have impacted your daily functioning, including school, work or interpersonal relationships.

- Experiencing symptoms such as itchy throat and being concerned about having contracted coronavirus, even without the presence of fever or other indicating symptoms.
- Feeling alone or a lack of support
- Excessively attending to or feeling obsessed with news, information, articles and comments related to COVID-19. Having difficulty refraining from reading the news, going to sleep, or distracting oneself
- Immediately taking in all information, jumping to conclusions, and then panicking or having mood swings
- Feeling disappointed; losing trust in systems or others
- Grief or loss, feeling sad, or a strong sense of unfairness

For students with a loved one back in China, you may also experience:

- Feeling guilty, ashamed, and self-blame for your lack of direct involvement or contribution
- Excessively worrying about a loved one in China, to the point that it significantly impacts your daily life
- Feeling angry, disappointed, and a lack of control; feeling like you and your loved one are living in two different worlds

You or your loved ones may have come into contact with a diagnosed patient, or may have been in quarantine, or may have been diagnosed with coronavirus. Your loved ones may be medical providers or essential personnel in China. Please know that all emotional reactions are completely normal, valid, and to some extent, helpful. Please allow them to emerge, acknowledge and accept their existence, and try to understand them. However, if you start to feel overwhelmed and negatively impacted by your reactions, you may want some assistance.

Coping:

- Maintain a healthy routine as much as possible while still following any public health recommendations around social distancing.
 - Stressful events can disrupt your daily routine, which can cause even greater stress. Therefore, it is important to make sure you are taking care of yourself by eating healthfully, and getting enough sleep.

- Think positively.
- Exercise
 - Physical activities can boost your immune system, make you feel good, de-stress, and help with sleep. If you cannot go to the gym, try exercising outside. Take a walk in nature.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with others by calling or texting (in moderation)
 - Talking about your thoughts and feelings with someone else can help alleviate your stress, allow you to find support, and feel less lonely.
- Intentionally limit access to social media. Stay informed through official, fact-checked channels
 - Inaccurate information can easily cause anxiety
 - Being overloaded by information can lead to more stress. Therefore, it is important to limit your exposure and be aware of repetitive information. For example, limit the time you spend on reading news or using social media for updates.
 - Pay attention to some positive news.
- Check in with your loved ones (in moderation)
 - Encourage your loved ones, listen to them, understand their situation, and provide help within your capacity. Try not to over-interpret their situations in spite of your worries and concerns
- Establish boundaries
 - Learn to say “no” assertively when you prefer not to talk about a certain topic.
 - Engage in conversations that are unrelated to the outbreak. Understand there is life going on outside of the current crisis.
- Seek professional support.
 - Utilize counseling services hotlines (click [here](#)), check in virtually with Counseling and Psychological Services in McCosh Health Center.

CPS: (609) 258-3141

McCosh Infirmary: (609) 258-3139
(access to medical after-hours)

Public Safety: (609) 258-3333
(access to deans on call after-hours)

How to Handle Instances of Bias or Discrimination:

Unfortunately, in times of crisis and fear, xenophobia can sometimes emerge. You may experience bias or discrimination because of your identity or your relationship to people who live in China. If any of the following events have happened, please consider these options. Please know it is okay if you decide not to respond formally if you lack the time, energy, or mental resources to take formal action.

- If you experience discrimination based upon your racial, national, or provincial identity
 - Make a record of the incident and the details. Consider reporting the incident or seeking help from professionals. Check here to identify resources and reporting options. <https://inclusive.princeton.edu/addressing-concerns/bias-discrimination-harassment>
 - You can also share your experience with people who you trust, which might validate your experience and feelings.
- If you read false information or insulting/condescending articles from the media regarding your identity or your hometown, you may feel angry, helpless, or wronged
 - Please know these reactions are valid and potentially helpful. If your current state allows, you can provide feedback and advocate through appropriate channels. You can also share it with people you trust to gain support and advocate together.
- If you encounter a friend, an advisor, or someone you know says things insensitive or discriminatory
 - It is completely valid to feel angry, misunderstood, disappointed, sad, or confused. Princeton University encourages all members of our community to report all incidents of discrimination and/or harassment directed at you, or directed at others, to the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. The office responds to all allegations of discrimination and harassment and takes steps to ensure that each is handled according to applicable policies and legal requirements. <https://inclusive.princeton.edu/addressing-concerns>

Please know, your campus community is here to help!