



## Graduate School Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Research suggests that graduate students are at significantly greater risk of mental health concerns than the general population (Evans et al., 2018). This is unsurprising given the often highly competitive nature of graduate programs, feelings of imposter syndrome (Cowie et al., 2018), financial stress, social isolation, and concerns about obtaining a job after completing your degree. This alone would be a challenge for anyone without the additional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, more than ever, the suggestions below may support you during this time of uncertainty and transition.

### **Establish a New Routine:**

Having a structure or schedule can help you regain a sense of control and give you an objective for your day. It is helpful to include some staples of general wellness in this routine such as regular exercise, eating nutritious meals, a daily self-care activity, and maintaining sufficient sleep.

### **Maintain Social Connections:**

You may be separated from your social support system. It is important to still maintain connections while maintaining social-distancing practices. Talk, text, and schedule virtual hangouts. There are a number of online forums to connect and/or relate to other graduate students that can offer a sense of community.

### **Set Healthy Boundaries with Work:**

Communicate with your program and/or research advisor to clarify expectations for your work at this time. Avoid setting unrealistic expectations on your productivity and maintain personal boundaries regarding your workload and availability to your program/advisor while working from home.

### **Separate Yourself from Problematic Systems:**

Many graduate programs have systemic issues that promote unhealthy competition among peers and work to magnify your insecurities. Work to avoid internalizing blame and remember that there are likely some external factors contributing to your experiences.

## **Know Your Resources**

### **McLeod Tyler Wellness Center**

Counseling Center  
Student Health Center  
Health Promotion  
Center for Mindfulness & Authentic Excellence  
240 Gooch Drive  
Williamsburg, VA 23185

### **Dean of Students Office**

Student Accessibility Services  
Academic Enrichment  
Campus Center  
Room 109  
104 Jamestown Road  
Williamsburg, VA 23185

### **References:**

- Evans, T., Bira, L., Gastelum, J., Weise, L., & Vanderford, N. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology, 36*, 282-284.
- Cowie, M., Nealis, L., Sherry, S., Hewitt, P., & Flett G. (2018). Perfectionism and academic difficulties in graduate students: Testing incremental prediction and gender moderation. *Personality and Individual Differences, 123* (1), 223-228.

Created by the William & Mary Counseling Center. For brief supportive services during business hours or for crisis services after hours and on weekends, call (757) 221-3620 or call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255. For a life-threatening emergency call 911.