

Greetings!

The entire NDSU community has been working diligently for our return to campus. While we try to stay positive and optimistic, we know that the unknowns of living in a pandemic can lead to a variety of negative feelings; feelings such as anxiety, fear, grief, sadness, and anger.

The mission of the [President's Council for Campus Well-being](#) (PCCW) is to support the academic mission of the University by increasing and sustaining all aspects of well-being. One area of focus is the mental health of our community. As we work to create a campus community where members are mentally and emotionally healthy, resilient, self-aware, and supported, we want to acknowledge that it is hard during these challenging times.

As co-chairs of the mental health committee, we would like to take this opportunity to share some pertinent information related to mental health and the pandemic from a recent article entitled [Your 'Surge Capacity' Is Depleted – It's Why You Feel Awful](#). The article describes how we depend on our surge capacity to successfully deal with how our lives have been affected. Your surge capacity is a collection of mental and physical adaptive systems that help you to successfully deal with short-term stressful situations. The article distinguishes between short-term stressful situations and what we are experiencing now as we live through a pandemic. The ongoing nature of the pandemic continues to pull from our surge capacity without giving us a chance to recharge.

So, how do we adjust to our current ever-changing situation in a way that will allow us to replenish our surge capacity along the way?

- Realize that this is likely a once in a lifetime experience and that none of us have dealt with such a situation before, so we should not expect to be perfect in dealing with the ups and downs of the pandemic.
- Realize that it is OK to grieve what has been lost, including what is known as ambiguous loss: any loss that is unclear and lacks a resolution.
- Remember who you are, the core of your identity. Your identity as a professional, spouse, partner, son/daughter, sibling, parent, athlete, etc. has not likely changed; let this identity help guide you through this crisis.
- Accept that for the length of the pandemic you are not in full control, decide what you can control and take-action in those areas.
- Look for activities, both new and old, that are fulfilling and that will help you stay healthy along the way:
 - Practice healthy self-care strategies with respect to diet, sleep, and exercise.
 - Stay connected with family and friends in whatever way is possible.
 - Establish a routine to add structure to your life and to increase your sense of control over your life.
 - Take breaks from the news and social media.
 - Use free time to try or to learn something new-such as a language, musical instrument, or exercise program.
 - Learn about and practice [mindfulness and/or meditation](#).
 - Seek professional help if you are experiencing persistent feelings of anxiety, anger, irritability, sadness, hopelessness, significant impairments in daily functioning, thoughts of self-harm, substance abuse, or thoughts of suicide. NDSU faculty and staff members can take advantage of the University's [Employee Assistance Program](#).

While we all work to create a successful academic experience for our students, it is important that we take care of ourselves along the way - recharging our surge capacity as we move through the semester. The President's Council for Campus Well-being will work hard throughout the year to bring a sense of wellness to all areas of the campus community, but in this time of crisis we felt it was important to share information about self-care related to your individual mental health.

In closing, the NDSU Counseling Center provides the following statement about resiliency: *While we are currently facing a time of great uncertainty, it is important to remember that human beings are resilient. We tend to overestimate how badly we will be affected by negative events and underestimate how well we cope with difficult situations. Be mindful that you are likely more resilient than you think. While it seems that there are many things currently out of control, focus on what you can control and look for opportunities for growth along the way.*

Well Wishes,

Bill Burns and Emily Frazier, Co-Chairs of the PCCW Mental Health Committee