

Mental health toolkit

For Times of Lockdown (and frankly, anytime!)

This toolkit has been especially prepared for members of the CEU student body as we head into lockdown – and into online-only classes. For those of you who are working remotely, perhaps in places that may not have such a strict C-19 restrictions in place, there are still some great self-help and wellbeing ideas here. Please, read on:

For Vienna-based students

- Stay up to date with the latest news and updates on the Corona Virus regulations in Austria with Metropole's COVID updates: <https://metropole.at/coronavirus-updates-in-english/> On the other hand, be intentional about news intake. While it is good to stay informed and seek updates periodically, set boundaries such as not to feel inundated.

- If you feel that you need to speak to an anonymous third-party, contact the ÖH Helpline for anonymous counseling. You can reach them at: +43 1 585 33 33. The ÖH helpline is supervised by specially trained employees of the Association for Psychotherapy. Advice for further consultation and or psychological support is also available.

CONSULTATION HOURS OF THE ÖH HELPLINE:

Monday: 3: 00 - 6: 00 p.m.

Wednesday: 4: 00 - 6: 00 p.m.

Thursday: 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

- For immediate support call Rat auf Draht at **147**, which is an advice hotline for children and young adults. The Rat auf Draht team is available for you anytime, anonymously, and free of charge. They also have a chat option on their website: <https://www.rataufdraht.at/>

For EVERYONE!

- Stay active: Try to stay active and keep up with a regular exercise routine. If you need to follow a specific routine to get started, there are many free exercise videos available on YouTube. Try starting with [The Body Project](#) for low-impact cardio workouts, or [Blogilates](#) for a Pilates and cardio combination workout program. A cardio exercise daily for 30-40 minutes is the best anxiety and stress killer!

- Remember to go for a walk once a day, take in some fresh air and soak up some sun rays. (If you're in Vienna here are a few cool places to visit while you're out for a walk: <https://www.viennawurstelstand.com/guide/autumn-walks-vienna/>. If you are a runner, check out some cool spots to run here: <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/austria/articles/10-peaceful-running-routes-in-vienna/>)

- Meditation and Mindfulness: Some [studies](#) have shown that regular mindfulness and meditation practices can positively improve mental and physical health. There are several ways to meditate. We recommend starting with one of the following mindfulness apps that you can download on your phone or access through your computer. Most of these apps have a 5-day free guide to teach you how to start meditating: [The Mindfulness App](#), [Headspace](#), [Calm](#), [Insight timer](#).
- Take a few moments for taking deep breaths - make it a habit. Taking slow, deep, and controlled breaths for only 2-3 minutes can have a calming effect on both your mental and physical health. Read more about practicing the correct way to breathe in this New York Times article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/well/mind/breathe-exhale-repeat-the-benefits-of-controlled-breathing.html>
- Keep a journal. There are countless positive effects one can have from regular journaling. Read more about positive journaling effects here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/style/journaling-benefits.html>
- Stay social: call a friend or family member. It is important to remember that we are not going through this pandemic alone. Remember to both check-in with and check-on your friends and loved ones. Try setting regular video chat calls and virtual meet-ups.
- Go on a virtual tour of a museum: <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/mar/23/10-of-the-worlds-best-virtual-museum-and-art-gallery-tours>
- Do not forget to play: Dr. Stuart Brown, a researcher on Play and its effects on our well-being has found that there is a strong connection between the practice of play and the emotional and cognitive development of the brain. Read more about Dr. Stuart Brown and his work on Play here: <http://www.nifplay.org/>
- Focus your attention on what you can do at home including hobbies, projects, or other things for which you have been meaning to find time. That is, avoid boredom.
- Focus on the things you can control, let go those you cannot. You have a control over your keeping hygienic rules, however, you cannot invent the vaccine, nor finance the process, right?!
- Make sure you go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Avoid the temptation to stay up late and stay longer in bed. And yes, prioritize sleep.
- Setting intentions for more mindfulness is important for our well-being. Knowing where to start can be overwhelming.

A good place to start is with something called **The Vowel Check: A E I O U Y**. These quick check points can help you stay on track of your mindfulness journey.

A - Have I been **A**bstinent today? (however, you define that. It can be a substitute for "Have I been Mindful", abstinent of thoughts positive or negative, habits.)

E- Have I **E**xercised today?

I – What have I done for myself today?

O – What have I done for **O**thers today? (check in on your friends, craft or create something for a friend of family member, surprise your friend by learning how to say something in their language)

U – Am I holding on to **U**nexpressed emotions today? (Write in your journal, call a family member or a friend. Call the Rat auf Draht hotline or the ÖH if you need to speak to a professional)

Y – **Y**eah! What is something good that has happened today?

- Try to take things **day-by-day**. Do your best to ensure you have what you need now and for the coming days and weeks in an intentional and constructive manner, but also try to remain present and grounded in what we know now.
- Stay hopeful - remind yourself that the pandemic is getting the utmost attention 24/7 on all levels and new strategies to help, are being developed and deployed regularly.

PLUS, please don't forget about our great psychological counselling unit here at CEU. You can always sign up for on-line student counselling no matter where you are in the world by sending an e-mail to one of the following counsellors. Or check out CEU's self-help webpage: <https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/psychofirstaid>

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