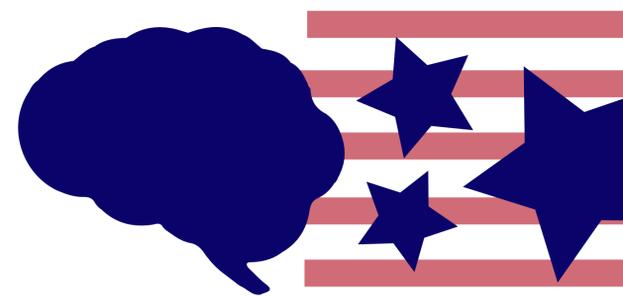


Maintaining Mental Health During Election Season



Mindfully limit your media exposure

24/7 connection to media can negatively impact our mental health, especially as negative campaigning and frequent news alerts can heighten stress.

Stay informed, but take **digital breaks** to take care of yourself.



Find What's in Your Control & Be Productive

- Make a specific plan for when, where, and how you'll **vote**.
- **Participate in ways that feel helpful.** If you can't alter your focus from the election and the political events occurring, use that focus for good and consider **volunteering** and make a difference in your community.
- **Know when it's time to focus on something else.** Finding balance is important.
- When uncertainty is present, be sure to **maintain your routine.** Do things that give you a sense of control. Clean your room, organize your space. **Focus on tasks that make you feel useful** and make time to **do those things you enjoy**, take breaks, exercise, go for a walk, and spend time with friends/family.



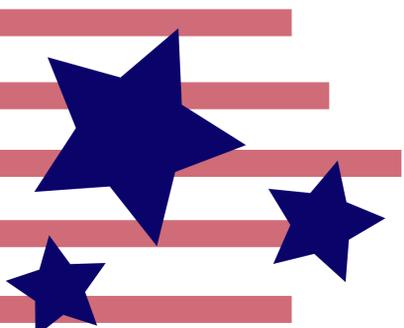
Regularly Use Stress Management Techniques

- Set a reminder on your phone to schedule relaxation breathing breaks throughout your day. Tense? **Take 20 slow deep breaths.** While you breathe, focus on breathing in *calm and relaxation*, breathing out *stress and worry*.
- If you notice worry present, work to calmly **review the facts** of the situation rather than predicting the future.
- Read and repeat **positive and reassuring statements** (i.e. "I am safe. I am calm. I can focus on other things.")
- **Spend time being creative.** Create a mood lifting playlist of favorite songs. Create a photo album of loved images of family/friends or places you've been or are looking forward to going in the future. Draw, paint, color, take photos, build something, and/or play music. Express yourself.
- If you notice stress and tension in your muscles, **take time to stretch and move.**
- **Download stress management apps** like: Headspace, Calm, Insight Timer, etc. to practice relaxation and breathe.



Connect With Others & Something Larger Than Yourself

- While meaningful conversation and debate can be energizing, **know your support system** and what your needs are. **Be intentional** about who you spend time with and the topics that may be most helpful to discuss and when. **Know you're not alone** and find those you can connect with.
- **Connecting with something bigger** can help you maintain perspective and improve your emotional health. Connect with a spiritual or religious practice, spend time in nature, spend time with children or animals, check in with a mentor, enjoy art (i.e. music, a theater performance, visit an art gallery), etc.



For Professional Support & Additional Resources :

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visit <https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/>