

THRIVING AT HOME



5 WAYS TO CONTINUE PERSONAL GROWTH DURING A TIME OF ADJUSTMENT

Returning home for breaks, and now with the latest COVID-19 pandemic, prompts a lot of conflicting emotions. Students have reported experiencing feelings of anxiety or depressive symptoms, even when relationships at home are overall positive. Often, what students are feeling is the polarization of the two environments and/or identities and the differences that accompany them. Curfews, rules, and expectations now run physically parallel for the first time with online class time, completion of assignments, discussions of internships, job applications, and theses without the buffer of being on the phone. Here are 5 checkpoints to keep in mind as you navigate being home:

1. Set healthy boundaries. As an adult, you are allowed to redefine yourself and need for more space, which can make family and loved ones uncomfortable... and that is ok. The purpose of boundaries is to create your own lines in the sand and express your own needs and expectations. This is easier said than done, and something to work on with a therapist, as it takes consistency, confidence and clear communication. Communicating with others about your needs is a skill you will utilize for your entire life, so start now.

2. Other's responses and reactions are theirs, not yours. Parents, peers, friends may have your best interest in mind, but you know yourself best. Trust yourself and try not to take others' input too personally. Feedback is there for you to consider, not necessarily absorb. We are allowed to have different opinions.

3. Focus on academics not as a pressure, but as a passion! Yes, grades are important. But it is equally important to begin training your brain to find joy in what you're doing. Old high school habits of competing with peers, or getting grades to please others, are not sustainable. Work hard and enjoy down time. In addition to this, distance-learning requires a whole different mind-set. As we all adjust to this, try to remember this is a great opportunity in learning from some incredibly brilliant people. The process looks different, for sure, however there is still so much to gain from Wes.

4. Reflect on the great social times so far at Wes and stay connected. Try to remember more than just the stress. Embrace what is offered, what you enjoy and share it with others. How do you take these experiences and remain connected with the amazing people you have met from all over the world? With this mandated social-distancing, take advantage of growing some relationships in a less threatening way of the "cliques" and social groups on campus and reach out to people you considered unapproachable... you never know...

5. Remember, it isn't "supposed" to be easy... even if societal norms say it is. In fact, it isn't "supposed" to be anything... It may seem that everyone around you is having an easy-breezy time, connecting and excelling. In reality, we are all struggling with our insecurities and fears. This is a time in your life where you begin to form your own wants, needs, interests, strengths and put them together to create a life that you want to live. Family can be a part of this, but you are the director of your show. Have confidence in your choices to build, explore and create your life. No one can define that for you!

The interesting part of change is that it is temporary. You all have the resources in you to adjust and adapt, and if additional support is needed, CAPS can help you identify where to find it. You may be back home or feeling alone on campus, however your growth and development of your identity can continue—and should.



Sarah Powers is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, born and raised in Connecticut. She joined CAPS in the Spring of 2019, and brings knowledge and passion for helping students gain a deeper understanding of their family systems and relationships. "I can talk about this topic all day. Watching students reflect and start to realize that they can really start defining themselves as individuals is such an exciting time to work with them." Sarah works with students on the internal conflict that can happen as a result of this process, in a supportive way, encouraging students to develop healthy boundaries and communication skills that can be utilized in all areas of life. If you have questions or want to hear more about something specific related to this, please reach out to Sarah for future blog articles.