

WESLEYAN IS SO MUCH MORE THAN AN ESTEEMED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION. WESLEYAN IS A COMMUNITY MADE UP OF MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS OF STUDENTS. AS A LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST, MY WORK FOCUSES HEAVILY ON FAMILY SYSTEMS AND FUNCTIONING. THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC HAS CREATED STRUGGLE AND UNCERTAINTY, AND IT IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT WE ARE HERE FOR EACH OTHER AS MEMBERS OF THE WESLEYAN COMMUNITY. IN A THREE-PART SERIES, THIS IS WHAT WE'VE LEARNED AND WANT TO PASS ON TO YOU AS THE SEMESTER COMES TO AN END.

Part III: Anticipation and Anxiety: Looking Forward in a Healthy Way

In the final chapter of this series, I focus on the chapters ahead. As the world slowly shifts in different directions it re-opens in some similar ways and has adapted in ways that are different. It is unfamiliar how the dust is settling with masked outings, lines on store floors, and the increase of education and meetings on computer screens. Most of our plans have been cancelled or rescheduled, so our calendars have less question marks and therefore less plans in general. There are still some dynamics up in the air, specifically around education. Our students have plenty of unknowns, whether they are graduates or returning to Wes. Parents share the accompanied feelings of discomfort, confusion and anxiety in the anticipation of what is to come.

Attention to any changes in mental health should continue to be a focus during this transition. It is important to encourage our students to maintain regular self-check-ins and assessment of needs. Below outlines 3 ways to support the process:

1. **Tracking Mood Baseline.** Our student's moods are naturally on a bit of a roller coaster as there continues to be change in our communities along with ongoing anticipation. With these fluctuations, it can be difficult to get an accurate snapshot of if we are more consistently anxious, experiencing depressive symptoms, or balanced. Mood tracking, utilizing a journal or online app, can be helpful in monitoring on whether an overall healthy perspective is being maintained.
2. **Acclimating by Participating in Positive Activity.** Are we observing our students engaging with positive supports and actively reaching out? Communities are providing increased resources and ways to connect. The semester has ended providing an increased amount of time to appreciate old or new hobbies. Support students by modeling and encouraging a positive attitude around activity and adapting to ways to be social.
3. **Acknowledgement of a Bright and Valuable Future.** Despite setbacks and change, are our students able to think clearly, see the big picture, and remain confident in their accomplishments and future goals? There has been major disruptions to our student's lives, so be on the lookout for the tendency to expect disappointment or being easily absorbed into the negativity of the news. This defense mechanism can be a natural response to grief, however it is important to intervene so that it does not interrupt other areas of life or pursuing future successes.

Mood Tracking Phone Apps

- Daylio
- MoodKit
- Worry Watch
- eMoods
- MoodTrack Diary
- Breathe2Relax
- RealifeChange



COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS)

In Conclusion

There is an incredible amount of hope from students, parents, staff and faculty to return to an on-campus setting at Wes. It has helped me to know that the Wesleyan community acknowledges the importance of the residential experience for students, as long as there is a safe way to do so. There is so much to look forward to, which cannot be forgotten. Remaining curious and keeping an open-mind are skills that are best exercised in times of turbulence. As supporters, mentors and guides, now is the time to model this and remind our students of how treasured they are and how their contributions are significant. Empower them and invest in them. Explain that often our journeys are less predictable than we anticipated. Together, we will all find our way!

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From CAPS, we wish you and your family's safety and health. We look forward to connecting with students again and continuing what we love to do. Please explore our website, as it is regularly updated with resources, vlogs and articles, to support our students and the people who support them.

Links

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/caps/index.html>

List of Mental Health Apps via CAPS Website

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/caps/CAPS%20at%20Home/Mental%20Health%20Apps.html>

Psychology Today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#))

<https://www.cdc.gov>

Connecticut Response to COVID-19

<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>

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I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, born and raised in Connecticut. I joined CAPS in the Spring of 2019, and I bring 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. I work 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, please reach out to me for future blog articles: spowers@wesleyan.edu .