



ST. MARY'S DOMINICAN HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Students and Parents,

This past week has presented many unforeseen challenges for all of us. We know as a school community, everyone has different life circumstances, but we are all working toward keeping our city and our student body safe and healthy. Here is a list of helpful tips from the Counseling Department that we hope will aid your families and you during the next few weeks.

Keep calm and stay healthy.



Are you feeling stressed, overwhelmed or anxious? That is ok! It makes sense that you may feel this way because there are seemingly so many things out of your control right now. Just remember, anxiety is NOT a bad thing. It can motivate you to change an unhelpful behavior, and it also can let you know when something isn't quite right. Don't let it isolate you. You're not alone! Talk it out with your parents, friends, and/or your counselor.

- ***Be gentle with yourself.*** Don't judge yourself based on how you or anyone else is feeling. Everyone experiences stress differently. What works for one person may not work for you and that's ok. Find what makes you feel calm, centered, and connected.
- ***Remember things that are in your control.*** Practice good hygiene. Make sure you wash your hands regularly and keep social distancing from others. Cover your mouth when you cough. If we all work together on this, it will help to slow the spread of the virus and to keep you healthy.

Maintain a normal schedule each day when possible.

- Daily routines give us all a sense of structure, control and normalcy during difficult times.
- Teens can create their own daily schedule and routine.
- The daily schedule can include time for: wake/sleep, academic work, meals, hobbies/talents, prayer, exercise, and free time.
- Be sure to include time for things that teens like to do such as journaling, art, reading favorite books, cooking/baking, dancing, or exercise.
- Stick to the schedule as much as possible.

Social connectedness: Make sure to reach out to family and friends.

- During this time, although we need to follow the recommended social distancing guidelines to help us stay safe and healthy, it is very important to stay socially connected with others.
- Feeling socially connected with others is essential to helping us stay mentally healthy too!
- If you start to feel anxious or upset, talking about your feelings with others can help you feel less anxious and alone.
- Make sure to talk to your parents, siblings, and other family members and share meaningful time with them, eat dinner together or take a walk with them.
- With parental guidance and approval reach out to a friend/classmate. This will help both you and the person you are talking to get through this time together.
- Remember we are all in this together, so continue to embrace each other, breathe, and take one day at a time.

Spirituality: We often grow most when we are out of our comfort zone.

- In these moments, as we are being stretched out of our comfort zones and regular routines, it's important that we stay focused on God. Remember that with God all things are possible and that He wants us to turn to Him when we feel afraid or unsure of what's happening in our world.
- Our schedules and routines may feel broken, but usually these broken cracks are where Jesus' light shines through the brightest.
- Focus on parts of your day that you can control: Create strong, healthy habits that nourish your body, mind, and spirit. This should include building time in your schedule for prayer, reflection, journaling, listening to praise & worship music, and time for prayer filled meditation.
- Keeping a gratitude journal is a wonderful habit to implement. Each day write down a few things you feel thankful for. When things feel different, try focusing on the positive things in your life. Our brains cannot feel gratitude and fear at the same time. This is great news because a daily practice of gratitude can help focus our brain on this positive feeling.
- Remember we are all in this together. Dominican is working hard to ease this transition to home learning. Your teachers, counselors, and administration are all here to help you.

Staying connected with your teachers and counselor.

- Keep in mind that Dominican's home learning program is new for all of us, so please be patient as we all learn together and create new routines and expectations.
- Please be sure to reach out to your teachers through Teams and email if you have any questions.
- Your Counselor is also available (Teams, email) if you have any concerns or questions.
- If you should become ill and are unable to keep up with your coursework, please let your counselor know as well as your teacher. Do your best to keep a list of all assignments that you miss to be revisited when you're feeling better.
- In the event of Technology issues or concerns, reach out to your teacher first, as they may be able to walk you through some steps to rectify the matter.
- As always, remember your classmates are an excellent resource to you.

How parents can model calmness.

- Children mimic what they see in their parents. Seeing parents keep a normal routine and remain calm and positive will help to reduce children's anxiety levels.
- Be mindful of how much you are sharing with them/in front of them (i.e. watching news and having adult conversations in their presence). They're listening even when we think they aren't.
- Older teenagers are capable of having upfront conversations about the situation. Be sure to keep the lines of communication open. Encourage them to ask questions.
- Remind teens that everything they "hear" or "read online" may not be factual. Encourage them to not listen to rumors. For example, you can model that by quoting what local/federal officials said in a press-conference.
- Family exercise can be a wonderful time to boost endorphins, reduce stress, and promote fun family time!

We hope these tips are helpful and please remember we are available if you have questions. We look forward to seeing you all soon!

Sincerely,

The Counseling Department

Additional resources:

- [Parent Resources from National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [American Counselor Association](#)