



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCE
PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT
**PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE
IN TIMES OF COVID-19**

— ÖZYEĞİN —
— UNIVERSITY —



This brochure contains advice and recommendations for coping with the overwhelming feelings and thoughts that people may experience in times of COVID-19. If you think that the recommendations given in the brochure are incomplete and you need further support and assistance, you may contact the OzU Psychological Development Unit.

WHAT CAN YOU GO THROUGH DURING THIS PERIOD?

Our lives have changed drastically since the onset of COVID-19. As the pandemic drags on, you may find yourself continuously or periodically going through the following psychological phases:

- You have to stay at home for a long time and are far away from the campus and the people you are used to seeing. You may long for your previous lifestyle, social life, friends, and vibrant campus life. As the pandemic prolongs, this longing may be replaced by hopelessness and despair.
- University carries much deeper meanings for students than just academic life. The lack of the independence that normally comes with campus life, or the satisfaction received from social relationships, or the excitement of new friendships forged may have changed the whole meaning of university life for you. Due to this change, student responsibilities may have become more tiresome for you.
- Your daily routine, self-care habits, or sleeping or eating order may have changed.
- Due to the limitations on your social life, the activities and hobbies you once enjoyed may no longer give you any pleasure or you may no longer feel motivated to do them.
- Alternatively, you may no longer be interested in the department or the academic fields of interest in which you were once interested, or you may be questioning your career choice.

- The intense anxiety you had at the beginning of the pandemic because of the uncertainties or the fear of losing your health may have given way to melancholy, despair, or weariness.
- You may compare your previous life with your current life, and you may feel anger or mourn for the things you have lost or have been deprived of.
- Despite the common experiences we all share during this period, as each of us has different circumstances, and experience different things, you may feel that you are paying a higher price than the others.
- You may have been infected with COVID-19. It is natural to feel depressed after recovering from the illness. You may have or still be giving care to an infected family member. You may have lost a loved one during this time. You may be struggling with bereavement, grief, and loss.
- You may have some questions on your mind about online courses and academic success. You may also experience performance anxiety or have difficulty in focusing.
- As you observe the economic ramifications of the pandemic, you may be feeling anxious about the future more than ever.
- Please always remember that **YOU ARE NOT ALONE AS YOU GO THROUGH THESE OVERWHELMING SITUATIONS.**



Importance of Accepting the Situation As Is

First of all, it is natural to go through these situations in times of unexpected, unforeseen, and long-term life experiences, such as the pandemic. We are going through a period in which our living spaces are limited, with our living conditions and preferences being drastically changed.

- The key to understand how you react to change and what emotions you feel is to accept the situation as is. Only by accepting the situation can you become aware of your needs and focus on what you can control.
- When you accept the ramifications of the pandemic times, you can find a way out of the anxiety you experience due to uncertainty and make the most of your situation. This way, you can make room in your life for activities that make you feel good.

About Online Education

Also, as time went on, you have become more experienced in being an online student, and these worries have given way to other feelings. The main problems encountered during distance education are technological problems, lacking a suitable environment for online courses and studying at home, online courses with new responsibilities which are unlike those in in-person instruction, changes to evaluation and assessment methods, and lacking the necessary social interaction in online instruction. These type of situations may reveal



feelings such as stress, anger, helplessness, and fear. On top of these, you may also be having difficulty in focusing or struggling with a lack of motivation. It is also natural that from time to time your interest in online courses and your field of study may decline.

From the previous semesters, we have sufficient data on online education, such as what has worked and what has not. Although there are

common distance education experiences that all students share, everyone's ability to focus, manage time, or study from home is different. At this point, noticing the areas you need to improve and focusing on these areas of improvement are crucial.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BOOST YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE?

Psychological resilience is the ability to adapt to challenges or major stresses of life. This concept, also known as mental fortitude, refers to how resilient and flexible we are in the face of challenging situations we encounter.

In order to give importance to your self-care and create your own clarity under the ongoing long-standing uncertainties, it is important to create an order with the data available in your hand for your own psychological resilience.

The following are helpful tips that you can apply in your daily life for your psychological resilience. You may try to use the tips that suit you best in order to create a positive change in your life or go through this process at more ease:

- Try to focus on the moment and the day as much as possible. It is challenging for your mind to be constantly oscillating between the past and the future. Focus on what will make you feel good today, now and here, and what you need at the moment.
- You can create daily and weekly routines based on your course schedule and exam calendar. This will considerably reduce the anxiety you feel due to uncertainty.



- Every day, when you wake up, you can engage in your self-care as if you were going to campus.
- Turning your camera on in the online courses or webinars you attend, and making an effort to participate and contribute can rapidly increase your decreased motivation.
- Take short breaks during the day and between classes. Engaging in relaxing activities during these breaks, such as physical exercises, breathing exercises, yoga, meditation, or face yoga will help you feel good.

- If you live with your family, you can talk to your family members about your home space and boundaries. You can try to express your needs without judgment. For example, you can share your course schedule or weekly schedule with your family and create your own space.
- You can incorporate your favorite activities and hobbies into your daily or weekly schedule. You can find an activity that suits you under your current circumstances and can be a source of excitement for you.
- When you feel overwhelmed or suffocated during the day, ask yourself “What would feel good to me?”, “What do I need now?” in order to reconnect with your inner self. These questions trigger self-compassion and enable you to take action for your needs. This way, you can create a space that feels good to you.
- Making contact has become more valuable than ever during these times. Get together with your friends and loved ones that you trust and spare some time for socializing, talking about how you feel, and having meaningful meetings.

YOU CAN TRY THESE EXERCISES

Breathing Exercise

Each feeling has a rhythm. When we feel afraid or anxious, the rhythm of our breathing also changes, and we tend to breath rapidly and shallowly. Breathing in this way makes us anxious again. When you feel like this, find a comfortable place for yourself, and lean back. Feel your feet on the ground and your whole body. Breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth. Each time you breathe in and out, focus on noticing your body.

During the ongoing pandemic times, whenever you feel that your anxiety overwhelms you or whenever you need it, you can bring your body to this position and try the breathing exercise. Please keep in mind that the more you repeat this exercise, the better you will get at it and the better results you will reap.



Anchor in the Storm

While going through an important phase like a pandemic, we can be caught in a whirlwind of feelings and thoughts that often overwhelm us. We think over and these negative thoughts over and over again rather than what is happening around us, and we are thrown around in a storm of emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and despair.

At such times, we need to anchor to reconnect with our inner self and notice what is happening around us. To do so,

1. First, take a deep breath and slow down a little while exhaling the breath you have inhaled.
2. Place your feet on the ground and notice the pressure you exert on the ground.
3. Notice the ground beneath your feet.
4. Gently press your palms together and notice the pressure that arises.
5. Now move your arms and legs. While doing this, notice the movement of your joints. Notice who is moving them.
6. Now look around you, and notice five objects that you can see in your surroundings.
7. Notice three voices you can hear.
8. Notice the warmth of the air on your skin.
9. Notice the smell in your environment.

10. While doing these, your attention may wander off to the thoughts that overwhelm you. Notice this, and gently redirect your attention to your sensory organs.
11. Be aware of your location and what you are doing.

When the storm is too strong, you may need to repeat these steps multiple times.

We all go through emotional storms. The more you practice this exercise in case of an emotional storm, the more you will improve your anchoring skills.

If you are tired of immobility: Resilience and Grounding Exercise

Being physically isolated from the outside world leads to negative emotions and disturbs the nervous system. To feel safe and reconnected with your inner self and to rebalance your nervous system, you may try this exercise.

- Roll a towel and place it behind your back on the chair, or take something harder and place it vertically behind your back on the chair in a way to contact your spine. Feel the contact of your feet with the ground, and the contact of the muscles on your back. Position your hands in front of your body (for instance, on your stomach, or chest, however you feel comfortable).
- Holding a stick, raise both arms slowly, then stretch your torso towards your thighs and drop the stick on the ground. Relax, and take a few breaths.

- Press your knees against the ground with your hands (if possible) and feel the entire sole of your feet. You can make small movements with your sole and toes to increase the feeling.
- Remember to breathe consciously. Take a breath, count until 10, and exhale. Keep the exhaling part longer. You can also try to make a sound while exhaling. Release any overwhelming feeling such as anger, fear, or sadness or any disturbing image you may have as you breathe out. Then, visualize an image in your mind that will make you smile.



This exercise will help you feel more grounded when you feel “detached from the present moment” or “outside your body”, while expanding your breathing space by increasing the amount of oxygen entering your lungs. This way, it will help you stay “here and now”.

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WHEN CAN YOU CONSULT US?

The pandemic has been going on for a long time and we have somehow adapted to these times. It is quite natural to still experience emotional ups and downs from time to time, to have worries when your academic responsibilities build up, and to hold a whirlwind of emotions within us.

If you continue to feel unhappy, lonely, or anxious as time goes on, if the situation has become tiresome and overwhelming, if you have lost your functionality, you do not have to cope with all these on your own.

You may consider getting support from our **Psychological Development Unit** to become aware of the challenges you are experiencing, to understand how you affect your life functions, and to better cope with the process. We continue to serve our students online. You can make an appointment with our unit for individual counseling via **MyOzU** (by launching the desktop application at <https://my.ozyegin.edu.tr/tr/page/2441>).

Also, you may follow our latest news on **MyOzU** and **OzU Daily News** to stay informed about and participate in our group sessions. Addressing our shared problems collectively

with a common language will make it so much easier for us to cope up with these days of being apart from each other.

