

Dear Faculty and Staff,

During this difficult time, please know that Student Health Services continues to be ready and available to support the whole Carolina community. We have put together information on coping with the recent flooding that has affected individuals in our community. Please feel free to use this information and share it widely.

Reach out to your students and encourage them to talk about their reactions and thoughts.

- Accept and normalize feelings:
  - Recognize that feelings of shock, disbelief, fear, confusion, anxiety, helplessness, and anger are very common after a natural disaster
  - For some people, these feelings and reactions can contribute to difficulty sleeping, distressful thoughts, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating.
- Consider that while people differ, for most of us, it takes a while to adapt to a crisis situation. Even as people are busy taking care of their own needs and helping others to care for their needs, survivors are often feeling a mix of relief, pain, and uncertainty.

### **Use Stress Reduction**

- To be the best you can be for yourself and others in challenging circumstances, it is important to identify and care for your needs.
- A major need in the aftermath of disaster is stress reduction. Often in the turmoil and demands of coping, we can lose sight of what has helped us in the past to calm down.
- Maintain your routine as much as possible.
- Recognize that in disasters what may feel like small things can help.
- Look for those things you can control. Set up achievable goals – whether it be playing a game; studying in increments, cleaning your room; finding a way to connect with friends and family
- Reinstating some version of your stress reducing routine is extraordinarily helpful to body and mind. Ideas include:
  - A few minutes to be alone
  - A vigorous walk
  - Reading a book
  - Listening to your favorite music
  - Exercise, including at the Strom
- Take time to assess and clarify your needs.
- Focus on your resiliency and the resiliency of others around you.
- Take a break from the news.
- Take a break from social media and connect with others around you or take a moment to yourself.
- Talk about what you have been thinking and feeling.

### **Maintain Connections**

Connections are crucial to both physical and psychological safety. Being a compassionate presence to others and feeling compassion and care from others is what sustains us. Being a compassionate presence basically means just “being there.” It could also mean:

- Sitting next to someone listening
- Listening as someone talks about what happened to them – what they lost, what they were concerned about, feelings and thoughts about what happened
- Spending time together
- Connecting with friends and family through social media
- Maintaining any connection that provides support, reduces helplessness, and mitigates isolation
- Volunteering to help others and receiving help yourself
  - Helping others and letting them help you not only speaks to “the power of giving” in generating happiness; but can restore a sense of personal competence and community vitality

**Seeking professional assistance and consultation:**

- If a student is unable to return to normal behavior and functioning, such as sleeping, eating, studying, relationship habits or displays unremitting panic or inability to cope, professional care is warranted:
  - Call Counseling & Psychiatric Services at 803-777-5223
    - Counseling: 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Byrnes Building, 901 Sumter Street
    - Psychiatric Services: Thomson Student Health Center
    - Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday, 2:00 pm 8:00 pm Sunday at the Thomson Student Health Center
  - If you are concerned about a student, consult with a professional in Counseling & Psychiatric Services at 803-777-5223
  - If urgent and it is after hours call University Law Enforcement and Safety 803-777-4215
  - More information at: [www.sa.sc.edu/shs/cp](http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/cp)
  - Additional Resource:
    - [Tips for College Students After a Disaster](#)
- If you would like a counselor to facilitate a classroom discussion regarding managing stress and coping with the recent flooding, contact Toby Lovell at [lovellt@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:lovellt@mailbox.sc.edu) or Jennifer Myers at [jenmyers@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:jenmyers@mailbox.sc.edu)

No matter how big or small, we can take steps to protect ourselves and those we love in the aftermath of disaster.

# Counseling & Psychiatry

## Student Health Services