Quarantine is a very hard time for all of us. We’re away from our friends, away from the things we love to do, and away from the familiarity. Even in isolation, it is important to take care of ourselves and each other. We asked our counselors how to handle some of our feelings and concerns during this uncertain time.

IS IT NORMAL FOR ME TO FEEL ANGRY?

BUXTON BD: Yes. There are a whole range of feelings and emotions that go along with the stay-at-home order and online learning, and actually anger can be a part of a healthy range of emotions. Anger may be a result of frustration, unfairness, isolation, or a lack of control over the situation. Anger itself is neither good nor bad, but rather how you handle that anger that is the key. It is when anger leads to out of control behavior, where there’s a risk of harm to self or others, that intervention may be necessary. When anger leads to unhealthy behavior, situations, or relationships, it is important to reach out to our support network and resources for help.

SOMETIMES I JUST DON’T WANT TO GET OUT OF BED, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

MS. SIADE: We have to acknowledge that what is happening right now in our world is not normal. The extended stay at home orders and being able to interact with others as we would typically can lead us to feel lonely, hopeless, or fatigued. When that happens, we tend to lose our sense of purpose and perhaps don’t see the point in getting out of bed. BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THIS SITUATION IS TEMPORARY AND EVENTUALLY PASS, AND THINGS WILL GET BACK TO NORMAL. The steps our society has been forced to implement in order to control the spread of a virus has created a set of fears that have a rational basis: economic fear, fear of catching the virus and getting sick, fear of losing a loved one, fear of being home alone, etc. Sometimes when we allow these fears to grow and take control of our thinking, it can be overwhelming and we don’t have the motivation or energy to face the day. Often re-occurring activities you enjoy, talking to friends or loved ones, or doing something to distract yourself can alleviate these anxiety. It can become chronic, last for a long time, and begin to affect daily life. It is time to reach out to your counselor for help.

All of us have a day every now and then where we don’t feel like facing the world, or we just want to stay in bed. It is important to distinguish between normal ups and downs that everyone has from time to time, and recurring or frequent days where you feel like staying in bed. Many of us feel down when things are not going well, but we rebounds and recover quickly once things get better. However, if these feelings last longer than usual and a return to normal routines and activities doesn’t help, you may be suffering from depression. When determining whether you are depressed, you need to consider whether you feel sad, empty, or hopeless much of the time, lose interest in activities you normally enjoy, and have trouble sleeping, eating, or enjoying activities you normally enjoy. If you have these symptoms for an extended period, loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy, etc. IF YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED, you should consider whether you feel sad, empty or hopeless much of the time, lose interest in activities you normally enjoy, and have trouble sleeping, eating, or enjoying activities you normally enjoy. When determining whether you are depressed, you need to consider whether you feel sad, empty, or hopeless much of the time, lose interest in activities you normally enjoy, etc. IF YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED, you should consider whether you feel sad, empty, or hopeless much of the time, lose interest in activities you normally enjoy, and have trouble sleeping, eating, or enjoying activities you normally enjoy. IF YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED, you should consider whether you feel sad, empty, or hopeless much of the time, lose interest in activities you normally enjoy, and have trouble sleeping, eating, or enjoying activities you normally enjoy.

“Right now we are grieving the loss of our way of life as we’ve always known it; we are grieving the loss of our physical proximity and connectedness to our ‘friends, family, peers and colleagues.’”

Ms. Slade MA, LPC School Therapist

“I feel lonely. How do I help this?

MS. SIADE: So many of us are feeling lonely and disconnected right now. It is not as easy to connect with others right now as it was before we had to “stay at home.” We are social beings, and when we can’t connect, it can make us feel lonely. Reaching out to others in a different way than before, Zoom, FaceTime, Teams can help us feel more connected and less lonely. Try playing games virtually with friends or family members; call a friend or family member; send messages to others. Make a focused effort to stay connected with others’ REACH OUT: OFTEN TIMES, WE RELY ON OTHERS TO REACH OUT TO US EVEN THOUGH WE DON’T BECOME FRUSTRATED, UPSET, LONELY, SAD OR INHABITABLE...but don’t feel that just because one is reaching out to you that you are not loved, missed or cared for. Most of the time, others are also waiting for someone to reach out to them as well. It can also be helpful to remind yourself of those you do have in your life, even though you may not be able to see them or be with them. Shifting our focus from our loneliness to “who loves us and cares for us?” and “What can I do to be closer to them.”

“I am so overwhelmed with school work and don’t know how to handle it, how can I manage my school work?”

MS. SIADE: First, give yourself grace and accept that this is new and overwhelming for a lot of people. It may be that some days you are all productive, provide us with structure and help to alleviate stress and anxiety. Try to develop a routine that works for you.

“Sometimes I lash out at my family when I don’t mean to, how do I prevent doing that?”

BUXTON BD: Living with others is a challenge, and now that we and our family members are at home all the time, it is not surprising that we get on each other’s nerves. Communication is the key. Being open and honest with family members, but also taking the time to LISTEN is important. Perhaps removing yourself to your room can be helpful when you feel like the tension is high, then come back later when things have calmed down. But again, eventually it is good to talk about frustrations in a respectful and mature manner. Remember that this situation is not normal for parents either, so mutual understanding goes a long way. If you do lash out, apologize and explain why you are feeling stressed. It may be good to offer to help around the house, or agree to spend some time with the rest of the family together.

“I feel like I’m missing out on such big life events. How do I cope with that?”

BUXTON BD: It is okay to feel this way, and to grieve missing events. It may help to realize that everyone else is missing them too. Discussing it with friends and family could help take some of the sting out of it. Staying connected to friends that are going through the same thing is so important. It is good to keep in mind that life is such a gift, and that there will be big events and special moments in the future. For seniors, this is indeed a tough time, missing out on some rites of passage events and times. But there is also a lot to be grateful for, and a promising future still ahead. It may be helpful to realize that too that we tend to build up some events in our mind to be greater than they actually are, and while we regret not experiencing those, over time those regrets will become less.

How can students get in touch with a counselor if they need help?

BUXTON BD: There are a few primary ways students can get in touch with our counselors. The most common ways now are email and online virtual meetings on Microsoft Teams. A lot of teachers have been checking in with their students from time to time, for those times when an email is not sufficient. The counselors have already done hundreds of online meetings through Teams.