

Hope Matters

As we focus on the technical *how* of moving our courses to remote learning, I also urge you to keep in mind the psychological impact this situation has on your students. I'm sharing this article with you, [Hope Matters](#). I quote here the ten suggestions the author, Mays Imad, makes. This is, of course, not an exhaustive list of the challenges our students are facing right now or the stress they are experiencing, but it does offer some things to think about and some suggestions for how we might try to make the situation better for them and for ourselves.

1. *Email your students to remind them that you are still there for them.*
2. *Tell them how you are shifting your schedule to deal with the new situation and that change is part of life. Humanize yourself and make it casual and lighthearted. For example, you might talk about how, in between reading their discussion posts, you decided to start your spring cleaning, which you've been putting off forever.*
3. *Reflect on the notion of rigor and continue to challenge and support your students. As instructors, we often must balance rigor and support, and this situation might be one where students will need more support than rigor. Establishing continuity doesn't mean you increase the amount of work required of them. I say this because I worry that some of us might be fixated on the rigor of the materials presented. Let's face it -- the rigor may suffer, and that's OK considering the situation.*
4. *Repeat some of the lessons you taught in class. Especially for those students who are missing the classroom environment, this will probably help activate their memory of being part of a community and remind them that they are still part of one. For example, in your email you can say something like, "Remember when we talked about this and ..."*
5. *Use hopeful and optimistic language, such as, "When you come back this fall ..." This will help students look forward to coming back to the campus.*
6. *Offer students an opportunity to exchange phone numbers and, for those who are interested, help them create a WhatsApp chat group. It can sometimes be difficult for a student to ask for a classmate's phone number.*
7. *Don't ignore the elephant in the room. If possible, talk about COVID-19 and fear. This is an opportunity for you to remind your students to consider the sources of their news and to beware of the large amount of misinformation.*
8. *Remember that students have left behind more than just their classes and academics. On both residential and commuter campuses, there are important spaces where students meet and talk about their nonacademic lives -- sports, upcoming concerts, recently discovered shows and so on. Consider creating a community discussion board for them to share what is happening in their lives, especially given the stress, fear and strains in these uncertain times.*
9. *Let your students know that you are there for them and that if they need help to reach out to you. Let them know that you are (I hope) in touch with counselors or mental health experts that can help them should they need to speak to someone.*
10. *Most important, ask each of your students how you can help them. The Persian poet Rumi says, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." Likewise, in times of uncertainty and unknowing, we can create a space where our students' voice and insights can illuminate the path we are carving out for them -- and us.*

