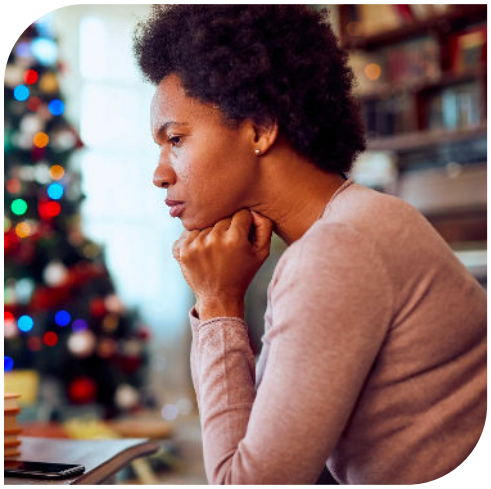
UNAPOLOGETICALLY FREE

Centering Mental Health on Black College Campuses

Fighting Finals Fatigue

Faculty Resource Guide



As the holidays approach and finals season comes to an end, it is important that faculty and staff take time to unwind and recharge as they navigate this demanding period. In this guide, we share practical strategies and self-care techniques to navigate this crucial time.

Originally facilitated by Dr. Gina Duncan
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THE STEVE FUND and THE UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND

This guide is brought to you by The Steve Fund in partnership with The United Negro College Fund (UNCF). The Steve Fund is the nation's leading organization focused on supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of young people of color. The UNCF's Institute for Capacity Building builds upon its heritage of supporting Black colleges and their outsized impact on student success and community progress. Together, both organizations have partnered with HBCUs to center mental health for their students, faculty and administration through workshops, seminars, conferences and virtual resources.

The end of the semester can be very stressful, leaving you feeling burned out and fatigued. Additionally, we are living through a period of tremendous uncertainty. Some of the major personal & societal stressors that have become more intense in the past several years include:

- Inflation/high cost of living
- Gun violence
- COVID pandemic
- Racial trauma/social injustice
- Political violence
- Reduced income
- Debt
- Childcare costs
- Food & housing insecurity
- Loss and illness

Chronic stress has a major impact on our physical & mental health. There is a strong connection between our thoughts, emotions and behaviors. In this guide, we are sharing strategies for maintaining emotional health during stressful transition periods such as the end of the semester and final exams.

MENTAL HEALTH ESSENTIALS

- Have someone to talk to
- Stay mindful & remember to breathe
- Have awareness of your thoughts & emotions
- Have healthy strategies for managing painful emotions in the moment

Stress & Our Nervous System

Sympathetic Nervous System - "Fight or Flight"

This system is responsible for responding to dangerous or stressful situations. In these situations, your sympathetic nervous system activates to speed up your heart rate, deliver more blood to areas of your body that need more oxygen or other responses to help your get out of danger.

Parasympathetic Nervous System - "Rest & Digest"

This system is responsible for the body's rest and digestion response when the body is relaxed, resting, or feeding. It basically undoes the work of the sympathetic nervous system after a stressful situation.

COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS IN THE BODY

- Low energy
- Panic attacks
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth
- Blurred eyesight or sore eyes
- Sleep problems
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches and headaches
- Chest pains and high blood pressure
- Indigestion or heartburn
- Upset stomach
- Insomnia
- Inability to focus
- Racing thoughts
- Change in appetite

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PAINFUL EMOTIONS




- Breathe through it
- Squeeze something
- Distract yourself
- Recognize that it will pass
- STOP & write out the negative thoughts & emotions
- Go for a walk
- Speak positive affirmations
- Turn on music that makes you feel good
- Give yourself grace
- Do a breathwork exercise



Journaling 101

Becoming more aware of your thoughts and emotions takes practice and keeping a journal can be very helpful!

- Write, record, do whatever works best for you!
- Set aside time in your day
- Create a cozy journaling area or find a safe nook to journal in
- The Centre for Clinical intervention has and online Thought Diary

SELF-REFLECTION

What do I need to **forgive myself for** & **release** in order to embrace a healthier way of being for myself?

Resources

Relevant Video Links

- **Shanila Sattar "The 6, 7, 8 Breath" Exercise:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_UnBcDzJ5k&t=1s

- **Practicing self-forgiveness and releasing negative thoughts and emotions is essential for self-love, self-compassion and emotional well-being. The song "I Forgive Myself & I Release" by artist Geminelle expresses this concept in a powerful and beautiful way.**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBFaJ4qX6s4

The Steve Fund Resources

- Stressed, depressed, or anxious? **Text STEVE to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7**
- For information and questions email: **info@stevefund.org**
- Visit **https://www.unapologetically-free.org/** for HBCU resources made in partnership with UNCF
- Follow on social media **@thestevefund**